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Woman's Work in English Fiction

From the Restoration to the Mid-Victorian Period

By

Clara H. Whitmore, A.M.

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1910

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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PREFACE

THE writings of many of the women considered in this volume have sunk into an oblivion from which their intrinsic merit should have preserved them. This is partly due to the fact that nearly all the books on literature have been written from a man's stand-point. While in other arts the tastes of men and women vary little, the choice of novels is to a large degree determined by sex. Many men who acknowledge unhesitatingly that Jane Austen is superior as an artist to Smollett, will find more pleasure in the breezy adventures of *Roderick Random* than in the drawing-room atmosphere of *Emma;* while no woman can read a novel of Smollett's without loathing, although she must acknowledge that the Scottish writer is a man of genius.

This book is written from a woman's viewpoint. Wherever my own judgment has been different from the generally accepted one, as in the estimate of some famous heroines, the point in question has been submitted to other women,

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and not recorded unless it met with the approval of a large number of women of cultivated taste.

This work was first undertaken at the suggestion of Dr. E. Charlton Black of Boston University for a Master's thesis, and it was due to his appreciative words that it was enlarged into book form. I also wish to thank Professor Ker of London University, and Dr. Henry A. Beers and Dr. Wilbur L. Cross of Yale University for the help which I obtained from them while a student in their classes. It is with the deepest sense of gratitude that I acknowledge the assistance given to me in this work by Mr. Charles Welsh, at whose suggestion the scope of the book was enlarged, and many parts strengthened. I wish especially to thank him for calling my attention to *The Cheap Repository* of Hannah More, and to the literary value of Maria Edgeworth's stories for children.

It is my only hope that this book may in a small measure fill a want which a school-girl recently expressed to me: "Our Club wanted to study about women, but we have searched the libraries and found nothing."

C. H. W.

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WOMAN'S WORK IN ENGLISH FICTION

CHAPTER I

The Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs. Behn. Mrs. Manley

IN the many volumes containing the records of the past, the names of few women appear, and the number is still smaller of those who have won fame in art or literature. Sappho, however, has shown that poetic feeling and expression are not denied the sex; Jeanne d'Arc was chosen to free France; Mrs. Somerville excelled in mathematics; Maria Mitchell ranked among the great astronomers; Rosa Bonheur had the stroke of a master. These women possessed genius, and one is tempted to ask why more women have not left enduring work, especially in the realm of art. The Madonna and Child, what a subject for a woman's brush! Yet the joy of maternity which shines in a

mother's eyes has seldom been expressed by her in words or on canvas. It was left for a man, William Blake, to write some of our sweetest songs of childhood.

But as soon as the novel appeared, a host of women writers sprang up. Women have always been story-tellers. Long before Homer sang of the fall of Troy, the Grecian matrons at their spinning related to their maids the story of Helen's infidelity; and, as they thought of their husbands and sons who had fallen for her sake, the story did not lack in fervour. But the minstrels have always had this advantage over the story-tellers: their words, sung to the lyre, were crystallised in rhythmic form, so that they resisted the action of time, while only the substance of the stories, not the words which gave them beauty and power, could be retained, and consequently they crumbled away. When the novel took on literary form, women began to write. They were not imitators of men, but opened up new paths of fiction, in many of which they excelled.

The first woman to essay prose fiction as an art was Margaret, Queen of Navarre. In the seventy-two tales of *The Heptameron*, a book written before the dawn of realism, she related many anecdotes of her brother, Francis the First, and his courtiers. Woman's permanent influence over the novel began about

1640, and was due directly to the Hotel Rambouillet, in whose grand *salon* there mingled freely for half a century the noblest minds of France. This *salon* was presided over by the Marquise de Rambouillet, who had left the licentious court of Henry the Fourth, and had formed here in her home between the Louvre and the Tuileries a little academy, where Corneille read his tragedies before they were published, and Bousset preached his first sermon, while among the listeners were the beautiful Duchess de Longueville, Madame de Lafayette, Madame de Sévigné and Mademoiselle de Scudéri, besides other persons of royal birth or of genius. The ladies of this *salon* became the censors of the manners, the literature, and even the language of France. Here was the first group of women writers whose fame extended beyond their own country, and has lasted, though somewhat dimmed, to the present. Since the seventeenth century the influence of women novelists has been ever widening.

In England, women entered the domain of literature later than in France, Spain, or Italy. Not until the Restoration did they take any active part in the world of letters; and not until the reign of George the Third did they make any marked contribution to fiction.

The first woman writer of prose fiction in England was the thrice noble and illustri-

ous Princess Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. During the Commonwealth, the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle had lived in exile, but with the restoration of Charles the Second, in 1660, they returned to London, where the Duchess soon became a notable personage. Crowds gathered in the park merely to see her pass, attracted partly by her fame as a writer, partly by the singularities she affected. Her black coach furnished with white curtains and adorned with silver trimmings instead of gilt, with the footmen dressed in long black coats, was readily distinguished from other carriages in the park. Her peculiarities of dress were no less marked. Her long black *juste-au-corps*, her hair hanging in curls about her bared neck, her much beplumed velvet cap of her own designing, were objects of ridicule to the court wits, who even asserted that she wore more than the usual number of black patches upon her comely face.

More singular than her habiliments were her pretentions as a woman of letters, which caused the courtiers to laugh at her conceit. She was evidently aware of this failing as she writes in her *Autobiography:* "I fear my ambition inclines to vain-glory, for I am very ambitious; yet 't is neither for beauty, wit, titles, wealth, or power, but as they are steps to raise me to Fame's tower, which is to live by remembrance in after-ages."

But, notwithstanding her detractors, she received sufficient praise to foster her belief in her own genius. Her plays were well received. Her poems were declared by her admirers equal to Shakespeare's. Her philosophical works, which she dedicated to the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge, were accepted with fulsome flattery of their author. When she visited the Royal Society at Arundel House, the Lord President met her at the door, and, with mace carried before him, escorted her into the room, where many experiments were performed for her pleasure. In 1676, a folio volume was published, entitled *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*, written by men of high rank and of learning, with the following dedication by the University of Cambridge:

To Margaret the First:
Princess of Philosophers:
Who hath dispelled errors:
Appeased the difference of opinions:
And restored Peace
To Learning's Commonwealth.

Yet this praise was not all flattery, for the scholarly Evelyn always speaks of her with respect, and after visiting her writes, "I was much pleased with the extraordinary fanciful habit, garb, and discourse of the Duchess."

Amid the arid wastes of her philosophical

works are green spots enlivened by good sense and humour that have a peculiar charm. At the time when the trained minds of the Royal Society were broadening scientific knowledge by careful experiments, this lady, with practically no education, sat herself down to write her thoughts upon the great subjects of matter and motion, mind and body. She was emboldened to publish her opinions, for, as she says: "Although it is probable, that some of the Opinions of Ancient Philosophers in Ancient times are erroneous, yet not all, neither are all Modern Opinions Truths, but truly I believe, there are more Errors in the One than Truth in the Other." Some of her explanations are very artless, as when she decides that passions are created in the heart and not in the head, because "Passion and Judgment seldom agree."

Her philosophical works are often compounded of fiction and fact. Her book called *The Description of a New World called the Blazing World* reminds one of some of the marvellous stories of Jules Verne. According to the story a merchant fell in love with a lady while she was gathering shells on the sea-coast, and carried her away in a light vessel. They were driven to the north pole, thence to the pole of another world which joined it. The conjunction of these two poles doubled the cold, so that it was insup-

portable, and all died but the lady. Bear-men conducted her to a warmer clime, and presented her to the emperor of the Blazing World, whose palace was of gold, with floors of diamonds. The emperor married the lady, and, at her desire to study philosophy, sent for the Duchess of Newcastle, "a plain and rational writer," to be her teacher. The story at this point rambles into philosophy.

Nature's Pictures drawn by Fancy's Pencil contains many suggestions for poems and novels. Particularly beautiful is the fragment of a story of a lord and lady who were forbidden to love in this world, but who died the same night, and met on the shores of the Styx. "Their souls did mingle and intermix as liquid essences, whereby their souls became as one." They preferred to enjoy themselves thus rather than go to Elysium, where they might be separated, and where the talk of the shades was always of the past, which to them was full of sorrow.

The Duchess of Newcastle wrote a series of letters on beauty, eloquence, time, theology, servants, wit, and kindred subjects, often illustrated by a little story, reminding the reader of some of the *Spectator* papers, which delighted the next generation. As in those papers, characters were introduced. Mrs. P.I., the Puritan dame, appears in several letters. She had received sanctification, and consequently considered all

vanities of dress, such as curls, bare necks, black patches, fans, ribbons, necklaces, and pendants, temptations of Satan and the signs of damnation. In a subsequent letter she becomes a preaching sister, and the Duchess has been to hear her, and thus comments upon the meeting: "There were a great many holy sisters and holy brethren met together, where many took their turns to preach; for as they are for liberty of conscience, so they are for liberty of preaching. But there were more sermons than learning, and more words than reason."

This is the first example of the use of letters in English fiction. In the next century it was adopted by Richardson for his three great novels, *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, and *Sir Charles Grandison;* it was used by Smollett in the novel of *Humphry Clinker*, and became a popular mode of composition with many lesser writers.

But posterity is chiefly indebted to the Duchess of Newcastle for her life of her husband and the autobiography that accompanies it. Of the former Charles Lamb wrote that it was a jewel for which "no casket is rich enough." Of the beaux and belles who were drawn by the ready pens of the playwrights of the court of Charles the Second none are worthy of a place beside the Duke of Newcastle and his incomparable wife.

With rare felicity she has described her home life in London with her brothers and sisters

before her marriage. Their chief amusements were a ride in their coaches about the streets of the city, a visit to Spring Gardens and Hyde Park; and sometimes a sail in the barges on the river, where they had music and supper. She announces with dignity her first meeting with the Duke of Newcastle in Paris, where she was maid of honour to the Queen Mother of England: "He was pleased to take some particular notice of me, and express more than an ordinary affection for me; insomuch that he resolved to choose me for his second wife." And in another place she writes: "I could not, nor had not the power to refuse him, by reason my affections were fixed on him, and he was the only person I ever was in love with. Neither was I ashamed to own it, but gloried therein." Here is the charm of brevity. Richardson would have blurred these clearly cut sentences by eight volumes.

In the biography of her husband she relates faithfully his services to Charles the First at the head of an army which he himself had raised; his final defeat near York by the Parliamentary forces; and his escape to the continent in 1644. Then followed his sixteen years of exile in Paris, Rotterdam, and Antwerp, where "he lived freely and nobly," entertaining many persons of quality, although he was often in extreme poverty, and could obtain credit merely

by the love and respect which his presence inspired. What a sad picture is given of the return of the exiles to their estates, which had been laid waste in the Civil War and later confiscated by Cromwell! But how the greatness of the true gentleman shines through it all, who, as he viewed one of his parks, seven of which had been completely destroyed, simply said, "He had been in hopes it would not have been so much defaced as he found it."

In the closing chapter the Duchess gives *Discourses Gathered from the Mouth of my noble Lord and Husband.* These show both sound sense and a broad view of affairs. She writes:

"I have heard My Lord say,

I

"That those which command the Wealth of a Kingdom, command the hearts and hands of the People.

. . . . . .

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"That many Laws do rather entrap than help the subject."

Clarendon, who thought but poorly of the Duke's abilities as a general, gives the same characterisation of him: a man of exact proportion, pleasant, witty, free but courtly in his manner, who loved all that were his friends, and hated none that were his enemies, and who

had proved his loyalty to his king by the sacrifice of his property and at the risk of his life.

Perhaps the Duchess of Newcastle has unwittingly drawn a true representation of the great body of English cavaliers, and has partly removed the stain which the immoralities of the court afterward put upon the name. These biographies give a story of marital felicity with all the characteristics of the domestic novel.

At this time the English novel was a crude, formless thing, without dignity in literature. The Duchess of Newcastle, who aspired to be ranked with Homer and Plato, would have spurned a place among writers of romance, although her genius was primarily that of the novelist. She constantly thought of plots, which she jotted down at random, her common method of composition. She has described characters, and has left many bright pictures of the manners and customs of her age. Her style of writing is better than that of many of her more scholarly contemporaries, who studied Latin models and strove to imitate them. She wrote as she thought and felt, so that her style is simple when not lost in the mazes of philosophical speculation. She had all the requisites necessary to write the great novel of the Restoration.

But in the next century her voluminous writings were forgotten, and the casual visitor

to Westminster Abbey who paused before the imposing monument in the north transept read with amused indifference the quaint inscription which marks the tomb of the noble pair; that she was the second wife of the Duke of Newcastle, that her name was Margaret Lucas; "a noble family, for all the brothers were valiant and all the sisters were virtuous." To Charles Lamb belongs the credit of discovering the worth of her writings. Delighting in oddities, but quick to discern truth from falsehood, he loved to pore over the old folios containing her works, and could not quite forgive his sister Mary for speaking disrespectfully of "the intellectuals of a dear favourite of mine of the last century but one—the thrice noble, chaste and virtuous, but again somewhat fantastical and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle."

Her desire for immortality is nearer its fulfilment to-day than at any previous time. A third edition of the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle* was published in 1675, the year after her death. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1872, it was included in Russell Smith's "Library of Old Authors," and since then a modernised English edition and a French edition of this book have been published. No one can read this biography without feeling the charm of the quaint, childlike personality of the Duchess of Newcastle.

While all London was talking of the "mad Duchess of Newcastle," another lady was living there no less eminent as a writer, but so distinguished for her wit, freedom of temper, and brilliant conversation, that even the great Dryden sought her friendship, and Sothern, Rochester, and Wycherley were among her admirers. She was named "Astrea," and hailed as the wonder and glory of her sex. But Aphra Behn's talents brought her a more substantial reward than fame. Her plays were presented to crowded houses; her novels were in every library, and she obtained a large income from her writings; she was the first English woman to earn a living by her pen.

In her early youth, Mrs. Behn lived for a time at Surinam in Dutch Guiana, where her father was governor. On one of the plantations was a negro in whose fate she became deeply interested. She learned from his own lips about his life in Africa, and was herself an eye witness of the indignities and tortures he suffered in slavery. She was so deeply impressed by his horrible fate, that on her return to London she related his story to King Charles the Second and at his request elaborated it into the novel *Oroonoko*.

According to the story, Oroonokò, an African warrior, was married to Imoinda, a beautiful maiden of his own people. His grandfather, a

powerful chieftain, also fell in love with the beautiful Imoinda and placed her in his harem. When he found that her love for Oroonoko still continued, he sold her secretly into slavery and her rightful husband could learn nothing of her whereabouts. Later Oroonoko and his men were invited by the captain of a Dutch trading ship to dine on board his vessel. They accepted the invitation, but, after dinner, the captain seized his guests, threw them into chains, and carried them to the West Indies, where he sold them as slaves. Here Oroonoko found his wife, whose loss he had deeply mourned, and they were reunited. Oroonoko, however, indignant at the treachery practised against himself and his men, incited the slaves to a revolt. They were overcome, and Oroonoko was tied to a whipping-post and severely punished. As he found that he could not escape, he resolved to die. But rather than leave Imoinda to the cruelty of her owners, he determined to slay first his wife, then his enemies, lastly himself. He told his plans to Imoinda, who willingly accompanied him into the forest, where he put her to death. When he saw his wife dead at his feet, his grief was so great that it deprived him of the strength to take vengeance on his enemies. He was again captured and led to a stake, where faggots were placed about him. The author has described his death with a faithfulness

to detail that carries with it the impress of truth: " 'My Friends, am I to die, or to be whipt?' And they cry'd, 'Whipt! no, you shall not escape so well.' And then he reply'd, smiling, 'A blessing on thee'; and assured them they need not tie him, for he would stand fix'd like a Rock, and endure Death so as should encourage them to die: 'But if you whip me' [said he], 'be sure you tie me fast.' "

The popularity of the book was instantaneous. It passed through several editions. It was translated into French and German, and adapted for the German stage, while Sothern put it on the stage in England. It created almost as great a sensation as did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* two hundred years later. Like Mrs. Stowe's novel it had a strong moral influence, as it was among the earliest efforts to call the attention of Europe to the evils of the African slave trade. Moreover, this her first novel gave Mrs. Behn an acknowledged place as a writer.

Oroonoko marks a distinct advance in English fiction. Nearly all novels before this had consisted of a series of stories held together by a loosely formed plot running through a number of volumes, sometimes only five, but occasionally, as in *The Grand Cyrus*, filling ten quartos. Their form was such that like the *Thousand and One Nights* they could be continued indefinitely. Most of these novels belonged either

to the pastoral romance or the historical allegory. In the former the ladies and gentlemen who in a desultory sort of way carried on the plot were disguised as shepherds and shepherdesses and lived in idyllic state in Arcadia. In the latter they masqueraded under the names of kings and queens of antiquity and entered with the flourish of trumpets and the sound of drums.

Oroonoko was the first English novel with a well developed plot. It moves along rapidly, without digression, to its tragic conclusion. Not until Fielding wrote *Joseph Andrews* was the plot of any English novel so definitely wrought. The lesser writer had a slight advantage over the greater. Mrs. Behn's novel is constructed upon dramatic lines, so that it holds the interest more closely to the main characters, and the end is awaited with intense expectation; while Fielding chose the epic form, which is more discursive, and *Joseph Andrews* like all his novels is excessively tame, almost hackneyed in its conclusion. Mrs. Behn's black hero is the first distinctly drawn character in English fiction, the first one that has any marked personality. Sometimes the enthusiasm with which he is described brings a smile to the lips of the modern reader and reminds one of the heroic savages of James Fenimore Cooper and Helen Hunt Jackson. She writes of him: "He was pretty tall, but of a Shape the most

exact that can be Fancy'd: The most famous Statuary could not form the Figure of a Man more admirably turned from Head to Foot. . . . There was no one Grace wanting, that bears the Standard of true Beauty." And thus she continues the description in the superlative degree.

But the story is for the most part realistic. Although the scenes in Africa show the influence of the French heroic novels, as if the author were afraid to leave her story in its simple truth but must adorn it with purple and ermine, as soon as it is transferred to Surinam, where Mrs. Behn had lived, it becomes real. It has local colouring, at that time an almost unknown attribute. It has the atmosphere of the tropics. The descriptions are vivid, and often photographic. Occasionally they are exaggerated, but few travellers to a region of which their hearers know nothing have been able to resist the temptation to deviate from the exact truth. But the whole novel, even at this late day, leaves one with the impression that it is a true biography.

In the history of the English novel, in which *Pamela* is given an important place as the morning star which heralded the great light of English realism about to burst upon the world, this well arranged, definite, picturesque story of *Oroonoko*, whose author was reposing quietly within the hallowed precincts of Westminster Abbey fifty years before Richardson introduced

Pamela to an admiring public, should not be forgotten. Before *Pamela* was published, the complete works of Mrs. Behn passed through eight editions. The plots of all her novels are well constructed, with little extraneous matter, but with the exception of Oroonoko the characters are shadowy beings, many of whom meet with a violent death. *The Nun or the Perjured Duty* has only five characters, all of whom perish in the meshes of love. *The Fair Jilt or the Amours of Prince Tarquin and Miranda*, founded on incidents that came to the author's knowledge during her residence in Antwerp, is well fitted for the columns of a modern yellow journal; the beautiful heroine causes the death of everyone who stands in the way of her love or her ambition, but she finally repents and lives happy ever after. Mrs. Behn's style is always careless, owing to her custom of writing while entertaining friends.

A great change took place in the public taste during the next hundred years, so that Mrs. Behn's novels, plays, and poems fell into disrepute. Sir Walter Scott tells the story of his grand-aunt who expressed a desire to see again Mrs. Behn's novels, which she had read with delight in her youth. He sent them to her sealed and marked "private and confidential." The next time he saw her, she gave them back with the words:

"Take back your bonny Mrs. Behn, and, if you will take my advice, put her in the fire, for I find it impossible to get through the very first novel. But is it not a very odd thing that I, an old woman of eighty and upward, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to read a book which sixty years ago I have heard read aloud for the amusement of large circles, consisting of the first and most creditable society in London?"

Mrs. Behn has been accused of great license in her conduct and of gross immorality in her writings. Her friend and biographer says of the former: "For my part I knew her intimately, and never saw ought unbecoming the just modesty of our sex, though more free and gay than the folly of the precise will allow." For the latter the fashion must be blamed more than she. Mrs. Behn was not actuated by the high moral principles of Mademoiselle de Scudéri and Madame de Lafayette, with whom love was an ennobling passion, nor was she writing for the refined men and women of the Hotel Rambouillet; she was striving to earn a living by pleasing the court of Charles the Second, and in that she was eminently successful.

Nearly a quarter of a century after the death of Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Manley published anonymously the first two volumes of the *New Atalantis*, the book by which she is chiefly known,

under the title of *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of both Sexes from the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean.* Mrs. Manley was a Tory, and she peopled the New Atalantis with members of the Whig party under Marlborough as Prince Fortunatus. The book is written in the form of a conversation carried on by Astrea, Virtue, and Intelligence, a personification of the *Court Gazette.* They described the Whig leaders so accurately, and related the scandal of the court so faithfully, that, although fictitious names were used, no key was needed to recognise the personages in the story.

The publisher and printer were arrested for libel, but Mrs. Manley came forward and owned the authorship. In her trial she was placed under a severe cross-examination by Lord Sunderland, who attempted to learn where she had obtained her information. She persisted in her statement that no real characters were meant, that it was all a work of imagination, but if it bore any resemblance to truth it must have come to her by inspiration. Upon Lord Sunderland's objecting to this statement, on the grounds that so immoral a book bore no trace of divine impulse, she replied that there were evil angels as well as good, who might possess equal powers of inspiration. The book was published in May, 1709; in the following Febru-

ary, she was discharged by order of the Queen's Bench.

Soon after her discharge from court, she wrote a third and fourth volume of the *New Atalantis* under the title, *Memoirs of Europe toward the Close of the Eighth Century written by Eginardus, Secretary and Favorite to Charlemagne, and done into English, by the Translator of the New Atalantis.* Here she has followed the French models. There is a loosely constructed plot, and the characters tell a series of stories. Many of the writers of Queen Anne's reign are described with none of that lustre that surrounds them now, but as they appeared to a cynical woman who knew them well. She refers to Steele as Don Phaebo, and ridicules his search for the philosopher's stone; and laments that Addison, whom she calls Maro, should prostitute his talents for gold, when he might become a second Vergil.

Mrs. Manley had been well trained to write a book like the *New Atalantis.* At sixteen, an age when Addison and Steele were at the Charterhouse preparing for Oxford, her father, Sir Roger Manley, died. A cousin, taking advantage of her helplessness, deceived her by a false marriage, and after three years abandoned her. Upon this she entered the household of the Duchess of Cleveland, the mistress of Charles the Second, who soon tired of her and dismissed

her from her service. She then began to write, and by her plays and political articles soon won an acknowledged place among the writers of Grub Street.

From the many references to her in the letters and journals of the period, she seems to have been popular with the writers of both political parties. Swift writes to Stella that she is a very generous person "for one of that sort," which many little incidents prove. She dedicated her play *Lucius* to Steele, with whom she was on alternate terms of enmity and friendship, as a public retribution for her ridicule of him in the *New Atalantis*, saying that "scandal between Whig and Tory goes for not." Steele, equally generous, wrote a prologue for the play, perhaps in retribution for some of the harsh criticisms of her in the *Tatler*. All readers of Pope remember the reference to her in the *Rape of the Lock*, where Lord Petre exclaims that his honour, name and praise shall live

As long as *Atalantis* shall be read.

Although Mrs. Manley's pen was constantly and effectively employed in the interest of the Tory party, she being at one time the editor of the *Examiner*, the Tory organ, none of her writings had the popularity of the *New Atalantis*. It went through seven editions and was translated into the French. The book has no intrinsic

merit; its language is scurrilous and obscene; but it appealed to the eager curiosity of the public concerning the private immoralities of men and women who were prominent at court. Human nature in its pages furnishes a contemptible spectacle.

The *New Atalantis* has now, however, assumed a permanent place in the history of fiction. This species of writing had been common, in France, but it was the first English novel in which political and personal scandal formed the groundwork of a romance. Swift followed its general plan in *Gulliver's Travels*, placing his political enemies in public office in Lilliput and Brobdingnag, only he so wrought upon them with his imagination that he gave to the world a finished work of art, while Mrs. Manley has left only the raw material with which the artist works. Smollett's political satire, *Adventures of an Atom*, was also suggested by the *New Atalantis*, but here the earlier writer has surpassed the later. All three of these writers took a low and cynical view of humanity.

The women novelists who directly followed Mrs. Manley did not have her strength, but they had a delicacy that has given to their writings a subtle charm. From the time of Sarah Fielding to the present threatened reaction the writings of women have been marked by chastity of thought and purity of expression.

CHAPTER II

Sarah Fielding. Mrs. Lennox. Mrs. Haywood. Mrs. Sheridan

ABOUT the middle of the eighteenth century, some interesting novels were written by women, but their fame was so overshadowed by the early masters of English fiction, who were then writing, that they have been almost forgotten. For in 1740 *Pamela* was published, the first novel of Samuel Richardson; in 1771, *Humphry Clinker* appeared, the last novel of Tobias Smollett; and during the thirty-one years between these two dates all the books of Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett were given to the world, and determined the nature of the English novel. The plot of most of their fifteen realistic novels is practically the same. The hero falls in love with a beautiful young lady, not over seventeen, and there is a conflict between lust and chastity. The hero, balked of his prey, travels up and down the world, where he meets with a series of adventures, all very much alike, and all bearing very little on the main plot. At last fate leads the

dashing hero to the church door, where he confers a ring on the fair heroine, a paltry piece of gold, the only reward for her fidelity, with the hero thrown in, much the worse for wear, and the curtain falls with the sound of the wedding bells in the distance.

The range of these novels is narrow. They describe a world in which the chief occupation is eating, drinking, swearing, gambling, and fighting. Their chief artistic excellence is the strength and vigour with which these low scenes are described. Sidney Lanier says of them: "They play upon life as upon a violin without a bridge, in the deliberate endeavour to get the most depressing tones possible from the instrument." And Taine, who could hardly endure any of them, writes of Fielding what he implies of the others: "One thing is wanted in your strongly-built folks—refinement; the delicate dreams, enthusiastic elevation, and trembling delicacy exist in nature equally with coarse vigour, noisy hilarity, and frank kindness."

The women who essayed the art of fiction during these years did not have so firm a grasp of the pen as their male contemporaries, and they have added no portraits to the gallery of fiction; but they saw and recorded many interesting scenes of British life which quite escaped the quick-sighted Fielding, or Sterne with the microscopic eyes.

In 1744, when Richardson had written only one book, and Fielding had published only two, before *Tom Jones* or *Clarissa Harlowe* had seen the light of day, Sarah Fielding published *David Simple*, under the title of *The Adventures of David Simple, containing an account of his travels through the cities of London and Westminster in the search of a real friend, by a Lady*. The author commenced the story as a satire on society. For a long time David's search is unsuccessful. Although he changed his lodgings every week, he could hear of no one who could be trusted. Many, to be sure, dropped hints of their own excellence, and the pity that they had to live with inferior neighbours. Among these was Mr. Spatter, who introduced him to Mr. Varnish. The former saw the faults of people through a magnifying glass; while the latter, when he mentioned a person's failings, added, "He was sure they had some good in them." But David soon learned that Mr. Varnish was no readier to assist a friend in need than the fault-finding Mr. Spatter.

Like her brother Henry, Sarah Fielding is often sarcastic. In one of the chapters she leaves David to his sufferings, "lest it should be thought," she added, "I am so ignorant of the world as not to know the proper time of forsaking people." But the pessimistic vein of the first volume changes to a more optimistic tone in the second. David, in his search for

one friend, finds three. Fortunately these consist of a brother and sister and a lady in love with the brother. Even at this early time, an author had no doubts as to how a novel should end. The heading of the last chapter in the book informs us that it contains two weddings, "and consequently the Conclusion of the Book."

In its construction, the plot is similar to that of the other novels of the period. David has plenty of time at his disposal, and listens with more patience than the reader to the detailed history of all the people he meets, and often begs a casual acquaintance to favour him with the story of his life.

But Sarah Fielding's chief charm to her women readers is the feminine view of her times. In *David Simple* we have the pleasure of travelling through England, but with a woman as our guide. As Harry Fielding travelled between Bath and London, the fair reader wonders what he reported to Mrs. Fielding of what he had seen and heard. Surely at these various inns there must have been some by-play of real affection, some act of modest kindness, some incident of delicate humour. Did he regale Mrs. Fielding with the scenes he has described for his readers? Probably when she asked him if anything had happened *en route*, he merely yawned and replied, "Oh, nothing worth while." He had too much

reverence for his wife to repeat these low scenes to her, and we suspect he had eyes for no others. What would Addison or Steele have seen in the same place?

Sarah Fielding also takes her characters on a stage-coach journey, but here we sit beside the fair heroine, an intelligent lady, and gaze at the men who sit opposite her. There is the Butterfly with his hair pinned up in blue papers, wearing a laced waistcoat, and humming an Italian air. He admires nothing but the ladies, and offered some little familiarity to our heroine, which she repulsed; upon this he paid her the greatest respect imaginable, being convinced, as she would not suffer any intimacy from *him*, she must be one of the most virtuous women that had ever been born. There is the Atheist, who being alone with her for a few moments makes love to her in an insinuating manner, and tries to prove to her that pleasure is the only thing to be sought in life, and assures her that she may follow her inclinations without a crime, "while she knew that nothing could so much oppose her *gratifying him*, as her *pleasing herself*." Then there is the Clergyman who makes honourable love to her, but by doing so puts an end to the friendship which she had hoped might be between them; until at the end of the journey, "she almost made a resolution never to speak to a man again, beginning to think it impossible for

a man to be civil to a woman, unless he had some designs upon her."

Whether or not women have ever portrayed the masculine sex truthfully is an open question. But a gentleman mellowed and softened in the light of ladies' smiles is quite a different creature from the same gentleman when seen among the sterner members of his own sex, and there are certain phases of men's characters portrayed in the novels of women which Fielding, Scott, and Thackeray seem never to have seen.

Miss Fielding descants upon many familiar scenes in a manner that would have made her a valuable contributor to the *Tatler* or *Spectator*. All kinds of human nature interested her. There is the man who advises David as a friend to buy a certain stock which he himself is secretly trying to sell because he knows it has decreased in value, thus showing that money transactions in London in the reigns of the Georges differed little from money transactions on the Stock Exchange to-day. In some respects, however, society has improved since the days of Sarah Fielding. She describes the gentlemen of social prominence who tumble up to the carriages of ladies who are driving through Covent Garden in the morning, and present them with cabbages or other vegetables which they have picked up from the stalls, too intoxicated to know that their conduct is ridiculous. There are the

crowds at the theatres who show their displeasure with a playwright by making so much noise that his play cannot be heard on its first night and so is condemned. Other writers of the period complain of having received this kind of treatment at the hands of the gentlemen mob. And then we are introduced to a scene in the fashionable West End which is a familiar one to-day, where the ladies of quality have their whist assemblies and spend all the morning visiting each other and discussing how the cards were played the previous evening and why certain tricks were lost.

We recognise the fact, however, that Miss Fielding's knowledge of life was but slight. She writes from the standpoint of a spectator, not like her brother as one who had been a part of it. She was one of that group of gentlewomen who gathered around Richardson and heard him read *Clarissa*, or discussed life and books with him at the breakfast table in the summer-house at North End, Hammersmith. Life was not lived there, but philosophy often sat at the board, and there was fine penetration into the characters and manners of men. Richardson transferred to Miss Fielding the compliment which Dr. Johnson had bestowed upon him, and it was not undeserved by the author of *David Simple:*

"What a knowledge of the human heart!

Well might a critical judge of writing say, as he did to me, that your late brother's knowledge of it was not (fine writer as he was) comparable to yours. His was but as the knowledge of the outside of a clock-work machine, while yours was that of all the finer springs and movements of the inside."

It is not difficult to conjure up a picture of the literary gentlemen and gentlewomen who used to breakfast with Richardson in the summer-house at North End; the gentlemen in their many-coloured velvet suits, the ladies wearing broad hoops, loose sacques, and Pamela hats. One of these ladies was Charlotte Ramsay, better known by her married name of Mrs. Lennox. Her father, Colonel James Ramsay, was lieutenant-governor of New York, where his daughter Charlotte was born in 1720. She was sent to England at the age of fifteen, and soon after her father died, leaving her unprovided for. She turned her attention to literature as a means of livelihood, and at once became a favourite in the literary circles of London, where she met and won the esteem of the great Dr. Johnson.

When her first novel, *The Life of Harriet Stuart*, was published, he showed his appreciation of its author in a unique manner. At his suggestion, the Ivy Lane Club and its friends

entertained Mrs. Lennox and her husband at the Devil's Tavern with a night of festivity. After an elaborate supper had been served, a hot apple-pie was brought in, stuffed full of bay-leaves, and Johnson with appropriate ceremonies crowned the author with a wreath of laurel. The night was passed in mirth and conversation; tea and coffee were often served; and not until the creaking of the street doors reminded them that it was eight o'clock in the morning did the guests, twenty in number, leave the tavern.

Mrs. Lennox's claim to a place in English literature rests solely upon her novel, *The Female Quixote*, published in 1752. Arabella, the heroine, is the daughter of a marquis who has retired into the country, where he lives remote from society. Her mother is dead; her father is immersed in his books, so that Arabella is left alone, and whiles away the hours by reading the novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéri. Her three great novels, *Clelia*, *The Grand Cyrus* and *Ibrahim*, are historical allegories, in which the France of Louis XIV is given an historical setting, and his courtiers masquerade under the names of famous men of antiquity. There is no attempt at historical accuracy. But to Arabella these books represented true history and depicted the real life of the world.

In a fine satirical passage Arabella informs

Mr. Selvin, a man so deeply read in ancient history that he fixed the date of any occurrence by Olympiads, not years, that Pisistratus had been inspired to enslave his country because of his love for Cleorante. Mr. Selvin wonders how this important fact could have escaped his own research, and conceives a great admiration for Arabella's learning.

In the novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéri the characters, even in moments of extreme danger, entertain each other with stories of their past experiences. When Arabella has unexpected guests she bids her maid relate to them the history of her mistress. She instructs her to "relate exactly every change of my countenance, number all my smiles, half-smiles, blushes, turnings pale, glances, pauses, full-stops, interruptions; the rise and falling of my voice, every motion of my eyes, and every gesture which I have used for these ten years past: nor omit the smallest circumstance that relates to me."

All the people Arabella meets are changed by her fancy into the characters of her favourite books. In common people she sees princes in disguise. If a man approaches her, she fancies that he is about to bear her away to some remote castle, or to mention the subject of love, which would be unpardonable, unless he had first captured cities in her behalf. Yet amid the wildest extravagances Arabella never loses her

charm. Her generosity and purity of thought make her a very lovable heroine, much more womanly than Clarissa or Sophia Western, and we do not wonder that Mr. Glanville continues to love her, although he is so often annoyed by her ridiculous fancies.

But her belief in her hallucinations is as firm as that of the Spanish Quixote for whom the book was named. Everyone will remember his attack on the windmills, which he mistook for giants. Arabella was equally brave. Thinking herself and some other ladies pursued, when the Thames cuts off their escape, she addresses her companions in language becoming one of her favourite heroines: "Once more, my fair Companions, if your honour be dear to you, if an immortal glory be worth your seeking, follow the example I shall set you, and equal, with me, the Roman Clelia." She plunged into the river, but was promptly rescued. The doctor who attended her in the illness that followed this heroic deed convinced her of the folly of trying to live according to these old books, and she consented to marry her faithful and deserving lover.

The character of Arabella is not drawn with the broad strong lines of Fielding, nor with the attention to minute detail which gives life to the characters of Richardson. But the girlish sweetness of Arabella, her refusal to believe wrong of

others, her ignorance of life, her contempt for a lover who has not shed blood nor captured cities in her behalf, is a reality, and shows that the author knew the nature of the romantic girl. In the noble simplicity of Arabella, Mrs. Lennox has, perhaps unconsciously, paid a high tribute to the moral effects of the novels of Scudéri. Arabella is the only clearly drawn character in the book. But one humorous situation follows another, so that the interest never flags.

The other novels of Mrs. Lennox have no value save as they show the trend of thought of the period. In *Henrietta*, afterward dramatised as *The Sister*, the heroine, granddaughter of an earl, rather than change her religion, leaves her family and becomes the maid of a rich but vulgar tradesman's daughter. Of course her mistress, who has treated her scurrilously, in time learns her true rank and is properly humbled. The name given to one of the chapters might suffice for the most of them: "In which our heroine is in great distress."

This would seem to be the proper heading for many chapters of many books of the period. In the days of Good Queen Bess, heroines were good and happy. In the merry reign of Charles, they were bad but happy. Pamela set a fashion from which heroines seldom dared to deviate for over a hundred years. They were

good—but, oh, so wretched! This type of women became such a favourite with both sexes, that even the sane-minded Scott says:

> And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.

During her period of distress Henrietta lodged with a milliner. Her landlady showed her a small collection of books and pointed with especial pleasure to her favourite novels: "There is Mrs. Haywood's Novels, did you ever read them? Oh! they are the finest love-sick passionate stories: I assure you, you 'll like them vastly." Henrietta, however, chose *Joseph Andrews* for her diversion. Mrs. Eliza Haywood was never admitted into that inner circle of highly respectable English ladies who clustered around Richardson. She was more of an adventuress in the domain of letters. In her first novels she followed the fashion set by Mrs. Manley and supplied the public with scandals in high life. *Memoirs of a Certain Island Adjacent to Utopia*, published in 1725, *The Secret Intrigues of the Count of Caramania*, published in 1727, are the highly suggestive titles of two of the most popular of her early works.

After Richardson had made Virtue more popular than Vice, Mrs. Haywood followed the literary fashion which he had set, and in 1751 wrote *The History of Miss Betsey Thoughtless*. This has sometimes been called a domestic novel.

but that is a misnomer, since the characters are seldom found at home, but rather are met in the various pleasure resorts of London. As was the fashion in the novels of this time, and probably not an uncommon occurrence in the English capital, the heroine was often forced into a chariot by some lawless libertine, but fortunately was always rescued by some more virtuous lover. The whole story is but a new arrangement of the one or two incidents with which Richardson had wrung the heart of the British public. It has one advantage over the most of the novels which had preceded it. There is little told that does not bear directly on the plot, the characters of the sub-plot being important personages in the main story, and the book has a definite conclusion.

None of the characters, however, are pleasing. The hero, Mr. Trueworthy, a combination of Tom Jones and Sir Charles Grandison, is a hypocrite. The other male characters are insignificant. Miss Betsey, the heroine, is almost charming. Conscious of her own innocence, she repeatedly appears in a light that makes her worldly lover, Mr. Trueworthy, suspect her virtue, until at last he begs to be released from his engagement to her. The author of the book stands as a duenna at Miss Betsey's side, and points out by the misfortunes of the heroine how foolish it is for girls to ignore public opinion,

and strives to inculcate the lesson that a husband is the best protection for a young girl. We are properly shocked at Miss Betsey's levity, who, although she had arrived at the mature age of fourteen, cared not a straw for any of the gentlemen who sought her hand, but liked to have them about her only because they flattered her vanity or afforded her a subject for mirth. Miss Betsey's gaiety, wit, and generosity would be very attractive—in fact, she is quite an up-to-date young lady—but we see how much better she would "get on" if she had a little more worldly wisdom. She is punished, as she deserves to be, by losing her lover, and marries a man who makes her very unhappy. Mr. Trueworthy, however, learns of her innocence; her husband fortunately dies, and the author takes the bold step of uniting the widow to her former lover, after a year of mourning and passing through much suffering, brought upon herself by her own thoughtlessness. She is rewarded, however, very much as Pamela was rewarded, by marrying a man of honour, who had judged her formerly by his own conduct, being too willing to believe by appearances that she had lost her chastity, or, at least, had sullied her good name.

In this novel, Mrs. Haywood is very near the line that divides the artist from the artisan. Like a young girl with good health and good

spirits, Miss Betsey is ever on the verge of sweeping aside the prejudices of her duenna, and asserting her own individuality, but is constantly held back by the sense of worldly propriety. Had Mrs. Haywood permitted Miss Betsey to carry the plot whither she would without let or hindrance, she would have won for herself an acknowledged place among the heroines of fiction.

The History of Miss Betsey Thoughtless was an epoch-making book. The adventures of its heroine in the city of London took possession of the imagination of Fanny Burney, while little more than a child, and led to the story of *Evelina*, the forerunner of Jane Austen and her school.

The fashion for weeping heroines was at its height, when, in 1761, Mrs. Francis Sheridan published *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph.* The story is written in the form of letters, in which the heroine reveals to a friend of her own sex all the secrets of her heart. All London rejoiced over the virtues of Sidney Biddulph, and wept over her sorrows. She had been educated "in the strictest principles of virtue; from which she never deviated, through the course of an innocent, though unhappy life." It was so pathetic a story that Dr. Johnson doubted if Mrs. Sheridan had a right to make her characters suffer so much, and

Charles James Fox, who sat up all night to read it, pronounced it the best of all novels of his time.

The book, as first written, was in three volumes. The author had brought the story to a most fitting close. Both Sidney's husband and the man whom she had really loved were dead, and the widow could have spent her days in pleasing melancholy, contented with the thought that she had never done a wrong. But the public demanded a continuation of the story. In 1767, two volumes were added, giving the history of Sidney's daughters, who seem to have inherited from their mother the enmity of the fates, for their sufferings were as great as hers.

Authors are prone to draw upon their own history for the emotions they depict. But Mrs. Sheridan's life did not furnish the tragic elements of *Sidney Biddulph*, although it was not without romance. Before her marriage, she wrote a pamphlet in praise of the conduct of one Thomas Sheridan, the manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin, during a riot that occurred in the theatre. Sheridan read these words in his praise, sought the acquaintance of their author, and before long married her.

History furnishes a long list of women of talent whose sons were men of genius. Mrs. Sheridan's second son, Richard Brinsley, the author of the

light and sparkling *Rivals*, inherited his mother's talents without her gloom. But Mrs. Sheridan also had some ability as a writer of comedy, and the most famous character of the *Rivals* was first sketched by her. In a comedy, *A Journey to Bath*, declined by Garrick, one of the characters was Mrs. Twyford, whom Richard Brinsley Sheridan transformed into that famous blundering coiner of words, Mrs. Malaprop.

Mrs. Sheridan's place in literature rests upon *Sidney Biddulph*. This novel was an innovation in English fiction. Nearly one hundred years earlier, Madame de Lafayette had written *The Princess of Clèves*, one of the most nearly perfect novels that has ever been written, and the first that depended for its interest, not alone on what was done, but on the subtle workings of the human heart which led to the doing of it. From that time the novels of French women were largely introspective. English women, however, were either less interested in the inner life, or more reserved in laying bare its secrets. *Sidney Biddulph* was the first English novel of this kind, and it left no definite trace on fiction, although it was the favourite novel of Charlotte Smith and had some slight effect upon her writings, and Mrs. Inchbald, Mrs. Opie, and Mary Brunton noted the feelings of their characters. Not until *Jane Eyre* was published, long after Mrs. Sheridan had been

forgotten, was there any great English novel of the inner life.

In its day *Sidney Biddulph* was exceedingly popular on the continent of Europe as well as in England. It was translated into German, and an adaptation of it was made in French by the Abbé Prévost, under the title, *Memoirs pour servir a l'histoire de la vertu.* But after all, Sidney's sorrows were not real, or she herself was not real; and we of to-day smile or yawn over the pages that drew tears from the eyes of the mighty Dr. Johnson.

Notwithstanding the many excellencies of English fiction during the middle of the eighteenth century, it was held in low repute. There had been many writers attempting to portray real life who, without the genius of the greater novelists, could imitate only their faults. In the preface to *Polly Honeycomb*, which was acted at Drury Lane theatre in 1760, George Colman, the author, gives the titles of about two hundred novels whose names appeared in a circulating library at that time. *Amorous Friars, or the Intrigues of a Convent; Beauty put to its Shifts, or the Young Virgin's Rambles; Bubbled Knights, or Successful Contrivances, plainly evincing, in two Familiar Instances lately transacted in this Metropolis, the Folly and Unreasonableness of Parents Laying a Restraint upon their Chil-*

dren's Inclinations in the Affairs of Love and Marriage; The Impetuous Lover, or the Guiltless Parricide; these are the titles of a few of the popular books of that period. Colman in the character of Polly Honeycomb, an earlier Lydia Languish, attempts to show the moral effects of such reading. Her head had been so turned by these books that her father exclaims, "A man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent-Garden, as trust the cultivation of her mind to A CIRCULATING LIBRARY."

Fiction at this time lacked delicacy and refinement. The characters lived largely in the streets or taverns, and were too much engrossed in the pleasures of active life to give any heed to thoughts or emotions. Though love was the constant theme of these books, as yet no true love story had been written. The fires of home had not been lighted. The refinements, the pure affections, the high ideals which cluster around the domestic hearth had as yet no place in the novel. It needed the feminine element, which, while no broader than that which had previously made the novel, by its own addition gave something new to it and made it truer to life.

While no woman of marked genius had appeared, the number and influence of women novelists continued to increase throughout the eighteenth century. Tim Cropdale in the novel

Humphry Clinker, who "had made shift to live many years by writing novels, at the rate of five pounds a volume," complains that "that branch of business is now engrossed by female authors, who publish merely for the propagation of virtue, with so much ease, and spirit, and delicacy, and knowledge of the human heart, and all in the serene tranquillity of high life, that the reader is not only enchanted by their genius, but reformed by their morality." Schlosser in his *History of the Eighteenth Century* pays this tribute to the moral influence of the women novelists: "With the increase of the number of writers in England in the course of the eighteenth century, women began to appear as authors instead of educating their children, and their influence upon morals and modes of thinking increased, as that of the clergy diminished."

CHAPTER III

Fanny Burney

A NOTEWORTHY transformation took place in the English novel during the late years of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth. This change cannot be explained by the great difference in manners only. The mode of life described by the early novelists was in existence sixty years after they wrote scenes typical of the customs and manners of their day, just as the quiet home life described by Miss Austen was to be found in England a hundred years before it graced the pages of a book. This new era in the English novel was due not to a change of environment, but to the new ideals of those who wrote.

In 1778, English fiction was represented by the work of Miss Burney, and for thirty-six years, until 1814, when *Waverley* appeared, this rare plant was preserved and kept alive by a group of women, who trimmed and pruned off many of its rough branches and gave to the wild native fruit a delicacy and fragrance unknown to it before. English women writers did

at that time for the English novel what French women had done in the preceding century for the French novel; they made it so pure in thought and expression that Bishop Huet was able to say of the French romances of the seventeenth century, "You 'll scarce find an expression or word which may shock chaste ears, or one single action which may give offence to modesty."

This great change in the English novel was inaugurated by a young woman ignorant of the world, whose power lay in her innocent and lively imagination. At his home in Queen Square and later in St. Martin's Street, Charles Burney, the father of Frances, entertained the most illustrious men of his day. Johnson, Reynolds, Garrick, Burke, and Colman were frequent guests, while members of the nobility thronged his parlours to listen to the famous Italian singers who gladly sang for the author of the *History of Music*. Here Fanny, a bashful but observant child, saw life in the drawing-room. But as Dr. Burney gave little heed to the comings and goings of his daughters, they played with the children of a wigmaker next door, where, perhaps, Fanny became acquainted with the vulgar side of London life, which is so humorously depicted in *Evelina*. She received but little education, nor was she more than a casual reader, but she was familar with *Pamela*, *Betsey Thoughtless*, *Rasselas*, and the *Vicar of*

Wakefield. Such was her preparation for becoming a writer of novels.

From her earliest years, she had delighted in writing stories and dramas, although she received little encouragement in this occupation. In her fifteenth year her step-mother proved to her so conclusively the folly of girls' scribbling that Fanny burned all her manuscripts, including *The History of Caroline Evelyn.* She could not, however, banish from her mind the fate of Caroline's infant daughter, born of high rank, but related through her grandmother to the vulgar people of the East End of London. The many embarrassing situations in which she might be placed haunted the imagination of the youthful writer, but it was not until her twenty-sixth year that these situations were described, when *Evelina or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* was published.

The success of the book was instantaneous. The name of the author, which had been withheld even from the publishers, was eagerly demanded. All agreed that only a man conversant with the world could have written such accurate descriptions of life both high and low. The wonder was increased when it was learned that the author was a young woman who had drawn her scenes, not from a knowledge of the world, but from her own intuition and imagination. Miss Burney became at once

an honoured member of the literary circle which Mrs. Thrale had gathered at Streatham, and a favourite of Dr. Johnson, who declared that *Evelina* was superior to anything that Fielding had written, and that some passages were worthy of the pen of Richardson. The book was accorded a place among English classics, which it has retained for over a century. "It was not hard fagging that produced such a work as *Evelina*," wrote Mr. Crisp to the youthful author. "It was the ebullition of true sterling genius—you wrote it because you could not help it—it came—and so you put it down on paper."

The novel, following the form so common in the eighteenth century, is written in the form of letters. The plot is somewhat time-honoured; there is the nurse's daughter substituted for the real heiress, and a mystery surrounding some of the characters; it is unfolded slowly with a slight strain upon the readers' credulity at the last, but it ends to the satisfaction of all concerned. In many incidents and in some of the characters the story suggests *Betsey Thoughtless*, but Miss Burney had greater powers of description than Mrs. Haywood.

The plot of the novel is forgotten, however, in the lively, witty manner in which the characters are drawn and the ludicrous situations in which they are placed. So long had these men and women held the mind of the author that they are

intensely real as they are presented to us at assemblies, balls, theatres, and operas, where we watch their oddities with amusement.

Indeed no woman has given so many graphic, droll, and minute descriptions of life as Miss Burney. Her genius in this respect is different from that of other women novelists. She has made a series of snap-shots of people in the most absurd situations and ridicules them while she is taking the picture. Few women writers can resist the temptation of peeping into the hearts of their men and women, and the knowledge thus gained gives them sympathy, while it often detracts from the strong lines of the external picture; a writer will not paint a villain quite so black if he believes he still preserves some remnants of a noble nature. But Miss Burney has no interest in the inner life of her men and women. She saw their peculiarities and was amused by them, and has presented them to the reader with minute descriptions and lively wit.

She also makes fine distinctions between people. Sir Clement Willoughby, the West End snob, and Mr. Smith, the East End beau, are drawn with discrimination. With what wit Miss Burney describes the scene at the *ridotto* between Evelina and Sir Clement. He had asked her to dance with him. Unwilling to do so, because she wished to dance with another gentleman, if he should ask her, she told Sir Clement

she was engaged for that dance. He did not leave her, however, but remained by her side and speculated as to who the beast was so hostile to his own interests as to forget to come to her; pitied the humiliation a lady must feel in having to wait for a gentleman, and pointed to each old and lame man in the room asking if he were the miscreant; he offered to find him for her and asked what kind of a coat he had on. When Evelina did not know, he became angry with the wretch who dared to address a lady in so insignificant a coat that it was unworthy of her notice. To save herself from further annoyance she danced with him, for she now knew that Sir Clement had seen through her artifice from the beginning.

But the portrait of Mr. Smith, the East End snob, is even better than that of Sir Clement Willoughby. Evelina is visiting her relatives at Snow Hill, when Mr. Smith enters, self-confident and vulgar. His aim in life, as he tells us, is to please the ladies. When Tom Branghton is disputing with his sister about the place where they shall go for amusement, he reprimands Tom for his lack of good breeding.

"O fie, Tom,—dispute with a lady!" cried Mr. Smith. "Now, as for me, I 'm for where you will, providing this young lady [meaning Evelina] is of the party; one place is the same as another to me, so that it be but agreeable to

the ladies. I would go anywhere with you, Ma'm, unless, indeed, it were to church;—ha, ha, ha, you 'll excuse me, Ma'm, but, really, I never could conquer my fear of a parson;—ha, ha, ha, — really, ladies, I beg your pardon, for being so rude, but I can't help laughing for my life."

Mr. Smith endeavoured to make himself particularly pleasing to Evelina, and for that purpose bought tickets for her and her relatives to attend the Hampstead Assembly. When he observed that Evelina was a little out of sorts, he attributed her low spirits to doubts of his intentions towards her. "To be sure," he told her, "marriage is all in all with the ladies; but with us gentlemen it 's quite another thing." He advised her not to be discouraged, saying with a patronising air, "You may very well be proud, for I assure you there is nobody so likely to catch me at last as yourself."

Both Sir Clement Willoughby and Mr. Smith are selfish and conceited; but the former had lived among the gentlemen of Mayfair, the latter among the tradespeople of Snow Hill, and this difference of environment is shown in every speech they utter.

It is the contrast between these two distinct classes of society that saves the book from becoming monotonous. Evelina visits the Pantheon with her West End friends. When Captain Mirvan wonders what people find in such

a place, Mr. Lovel, a fashionable fop, quickly rejoins: "What the ladies may come hither for, Sir, it would ill become *us* to determine; but as to we men, doubtless we can have no other view, than to admire them." At another time Evelina visits the opera with the vulgar Branghtons, who all rejoiced when the curtain dropped, and Mr. Branghton vowed he would never be caught again. The Branghtons at the opera is hardly inferior to Partridge at the play. Tom Branghton is a good representative of his class. He describes with glee the last night at Vauxhall: "There 's such squealing and squalling!—and then all the lamps are broke,—and the women skimper scamper;—I declare I would not take five guineas to miss the last night!"

All the characters, even the heroine, take delight in boisterous mirth. Much of the humour of the book consists rather in ludicrous situations than in any real delicacy of wit. Too often the laugh is at another's discomfiture, and so fails to please the present age with its kindlier feeling towards others. Such are the practical jokes which Captain Mirvan plays upon Madame Duval. In one instance, disguised as a robber, he waylays the lady's coach, and leaves her in a ditch with her feet tied to a tree. The many tricks which the doughty Salt plays upon this lady so much resemble some of the humorous scenes in *Joseph Andrews*, and *Tom Jones*

that we may infer the readers of that century found them laughable. The Captain and the French woman are two puppets which serve to introduce much of this horse-play. They are not even caricatures; they are entirely unlike anything in human life. With the exception of these two characters, all the men and women who provoked the mirth of the heroine are well portrayed.

Miss Burney is less felicitous in her descriptions of serious characters. Lord Orville, the same type of man as Sir Charles Grandison, is true only in the sense that Miss Burney announces the truth of the entire book. "I have not pretended to show the world what it actually *is*, but what it *appears* to a girl of seventeen," she wrote in the preface to *Evelina*. Lord Orville, all dignity, nobility, charm, and perfection, is but the ideal of a young girl.

Evelina was a new woman in literature, a revelation to the men of the time of George the Third. The sincerity of the book could not be doubted. "But," they asked, "did Evelina represent the woman's point of view of life? Surely no man ever held like views." The Lovelaces and Tom Joneses are not so attractive as when seen through the eyes of their own sex, and the heroines are not so soft and yielding as a man would create them. Evelina, like all Miss Burney's heroines, is independent, fearless,

and witty, with scarcely a trace of the traditional heroine of fiction. Saints and Magdalenes have always appealed to the masculine imagination. *La donna dolorosa* has occupied a prominent place in the art and literature of man's creation. Here he has revealed his sex egoism in all its nudity: the woman weeping for man, either lover, husband, or son; man the centre of her thoughts, her hopes and fears. This new heroine with a new regard towards man was a revelation to them. Evelina was the first woman to break the spell, to show them woman as woman, in lieu of woman as parasite and adjunct to man. Evelina is not always pleasing; she has n't always good manners; she sometimes laughs in the faces of the dashing beaux who are addressing her. But she is a woman of real flesh and blood; such women have existed in all time, and, like many women we meet every day and whom men in all ages have known, Evelina insists on being the centre of every scene.

In July, 1782, Miss Burney's second book, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, was published. This novel met with as enthusiastic a reception as *Evelina*. Gibbon read the whole five volumes in a day; Burke declared they had cost him three days, though he did not part with the story from the time he first opened it, and had sat up a whole night to finish it; and Sir Joshua

Reynolds had been fed while reading it, because he refused to quit it at the table.

The book shows more care and effort than *Evelina*. That was an outburst of youthful vivacity and spirits, but in *Cecilia* the author is striving to do her best. This is particularly revealed in the style, which shows the influence of Doctor Johnson, for it has lost the simplicity of *Evelina*. The diction is more ambitious, and the sentences are longer, many of them balanced. Even some of the inferior characters from their speech, appear to have received a lesson in English composition from Dr. Johnson.

But the novel owes its place among English classics to the varieties of characters portrayed and the vivid pictures of English life. Here again the gaieties of Vauxhall, Ranelagh, Marylebone and the Pantheon have become immortal, drawn with colours as vivid and enduring as Hogarth used in painting the sadder sides of London life. No other writer has brought these places before our eyes as clearly and as fully as Fanny Burney.

The plot of *Cecilia*, like that of *Evelina*, is so arranged as to present different classes of society. *Cecilia* has three guardians, with one of whom she must live during her minority. First she visits Mr. Harrel, a gay, fashionable man, a spendthrift and a gambler, who lives in a fashionable house in Portman Square, where Cecilia, during a con-

stant round of festivities, meets the fashionable people of London. Next she visits Mr. Briggs in the City, "a short thick, sturdy man, with very small keen black eyes, a square face, a dark complexion, and a snub nose." He was so miserly that when Cecilia asked for pen, ink, and a sheet of paper, he gave her a slate and pencil, as he supposed she had nothing of consequence to say. He was as sparing of his words as of his money, and used the same elliptical sentences in his speech as Dickens afterwards put into the mouth of Alfred Jingle, the famous character in *Pickwick Papers*. He thus advises Cecilia in regard to her lovers: "Take care of sharpers; don't trust shoe-buckles, nothing but Bristol stones! tricks in all things. A fine gentleman sharp as another man. Never give your heart to a gold-topped cane, nothing but brass gilt over. Cheats everywhere: fleece you in a year; won't leave you a groat. But one way to be safe, —bring 'em all to me." Lastly she visits Mr. Delvile, her third guardian, a man of family, who despised both the men associated with him as trustees of Cecilia; he lived in such gloomy state in his magnificent old house in St. James's Square that it inspired awe, and repressed all pleasure. Pride in their birth and prejudice against all parvenus were the faults of Mr. and Mrs. Delvile.

Besides these characters, there were many others whose names were for a long time familiar in every household. Sir Robert Floyer was as vain as Mr. Smith. Mr. Meadows was constantly bored to death; it was insufferable exertion to talk to a quiet woman, and a talkative one put him into a fever. At the opera the solos depressed him and the full orchestra fatigued him. He yawned while ladies were talking to him, and after he had begged them to repeat what they had said, forgot to listen. "I am tired to death! tired of everything," was his constant expression.

In his critical essay on Madame D'Arblay, Fanny Burney's married name, under which her later works were published, Macaulay has thus dealt with her treatment of character:

"Madame D'Arblay has left us scarcely anything but humours. Almost every one of her men and women has some one propensity developed to a morbid degree. In *Cecilia*, for example, Mr. Delvile never opens his lips without some allusion to his own birth and station; or Mr. Briggs without some allusion to the hoarding of money; or Mr. Hobson, without betraying the self-indulgence and self-importance of a purse-proud upstart; or Mr. Simkins, without uttering some sneaking remark for the purpose of currying favour with his customers; or Mr. Meadows, without expressing

apathy and weariness of life; or Mr. Albany, without declaiming about the vices of the rich and the misery of the poor; or Mrs. Belfield, without some indelicate eulogy on her son; or Lady Margaret, without indicating jealousy of her husband. Morrice is all skipping, officious impertinence, Mr. Gosport all sarcasm, Lady Honoria all lively prattle, Miss Larolles all silly prattle; if ever Madame D'Arblay aimed at more, as in the character of Monckton, we do not think that she succeeded well. . . . The variety of humours which is to be found in her novels is immense; and though the talk of each person separately is monotonous, the general effect is not monotony, but a most lively and agreeable diversity."

While the character of Monckton is not strongly drawn, one or two scenes in which he figures have great power. Mr. Monckton, who had married an aged woman for her money, lived in constant hope of her dissolution. He planned to keep Cecilia from marrying until that happy event, when he schemed to make her his bride, and thus acquire a second fortune. He had used his influence as a family friend to prejudice her lovers in her eyes, and had just succeeded in breaking up an intimacy which he feared: "A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remotest hopes; the object of his eager pursuit seemed still

within his reach, and the rival into whose power he had so lately almost beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution such as this, raised expectations more sanguine than ever; and in quitting the house, he exultingly considered himself released from every obstacle to his view,—till, just as he arrived home, he recollected his wife!"

Cecilia, the heroine of the novel, is only Evelina grown a little older, a little sadder, a little more worldly wise. The humour is, too, a little kindlier. The practical jokes so common in *Evelina* do not mar the pages of *Cecilia*. At times the latter novel becomes almost tragic. The scene at Vauxhall where Mr. Harrel puts an end to his life of dissipation is dramatic and thrilling. But Miss Burney had lost the buoyancy and lively fancy which made the charm of *Evelina*.

Miss Burney's last two novels, *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* and *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties*, have no claim to a place among English classics. It is strange that, as she saw more of life, she depicted it with less accuracy. This might seem to show that her first novels owe their excellence to her vivid imagination rather than to her powers of observation. Her weary life at court as second keeper of the robes to Queen Charlotte; her marriage to Monsieur D'Arblay, and the sorrows that came to her as

the wife of a French refugee; all her deeper experiences of life during the fourteen years between the publication of *Cecilia* and *Camilla*— these had completely changed her light, humorous view of externals, and with that loss her power as an artist disappeared.

Camilla has several heroines whose love affairs interest the reader. It thus bears a resemblance to Miss Austen's novels, who speaks of it with admiration and was, perhaps, influenced by it. Eugenia, who has received the education of a man, is pleasing. Clermont Lynmere, like Mr. Smith and Sir Robert Floyer, imagines that all the ladies are in love with him. Sir Hugh Tyrold, with his love for the classics and his regret that he had not been beaten into learning them when he was a boy, his strict ideas of virtue and his desire to make everybody happy, is well conceived, but the outlines are not strong enough to make him a living character. *Camilla* shows more than *Cecilia* the style of Dr. Johnson. It is heavy and slow, the words are long, and many of them of Latin derivation.

It was not until the year 1814, the year of *Waverley*, that her last novel, *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties*, was published, which, following the style of *Camilla*, was in five volumes. It was partly founded on incidents arising out of the French Revolution. The book was eagerly awaited; the publishers paid fifteen

hundred guineas for it; but even the friendliest critic pronounced it a literary failure.

To sum up, Macaulay in the essay before quoted makes clear Miss Burney's place in fiction:

"Miss Burney did for the English novel what Jeremy Collier did for the English drama; and she did it in a better way. She first showed that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and the vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force and with broad comic humour, and which yet should not contain a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy. She took away the reproach which lay on a most useful and delightful species of composition. She vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters . . . we owe to her not only *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla*, but also *Mansfield Park* and *The Absentee*."

CHAPTER IV

Hannah More

DURING the time that Dr. Johnson dominated the literary conscience of England, a group of ladies who had wearied of whist and quadrille, the common amusements of fashion, used to meet at the homes of one another to discuss literary and political subjects. They were called in ridicule the "Blue Stocking Club," because Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, who was always present at these gatherings, wore hose of that colour. Among the members distinguished by their wit and talents were Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, the author of an *Essay on the Genius of Shakespeare*; Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, a poetess and excellent Greek scholar; Mrs. Chapone, whose *Letters to Young Ladies* formed the standard of conduct for young women of two generations; Miss Reynolds, the sister of Sir Joshua; and Mrs. Vesey, noted as a charming hostess. Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, Reynolds, and Burke were frequenters of this club. One may well imagine that the conversation and wit of the Blue

Stockings were far too rare to be understood by the grosser minds of the mere devotees of fashion, who in consequence threw a ridicule upon them which has always adhered to the name.

Hannah More, who had already become known as a playwright, visited London in 1773, and at once was welcomed by this group. In a poem called *The Bas Bleu*, dedicated to Mrs. Vesey, she thus describes the pleasure of these meetings:

> Enlighten'd spirits! You, who know
> What charms from polish'd converse flow,
> Speak, for you can, the pure delight
> When kindling sympathies unite;
> When correspondent tastes impart
> Communion sweet from heart to heart;
> You ne'er the cold gradations need
> Which vulgar souls to union lead;
> No dry discussion to unfold
> The meaning caught ere well 't is told:
> In taste, in learning, wit, or science,
> Still kindled souls demand alliance:
> Each in the other joys to find
> The image answering to his mind.

The Blue Stocking Club was composed largely of Tories, so that when all Europe became restless under the influence of the French Revolution, they strongly combated the levelling doctrines of democracy. Hannah More in

particular, who had been conducting schools for the very poor near Bristol, saw how the teachings of the revolutionists affected men already prone to idleness and drink. To offset these influences, she published a little book with the following title-page: "Village Politics. Addressed to all the Mechanics, Journeymen, and Labourers, in Great Britain. By Will Chip, a country Carpenter."

It is not a novel in the strict sense of the word, but in simple language, easily understood, it teaches the labouring people the inconsistent attitude of France, and the strength and safety of the English constitution. It is not a deep book, but has good work-a-day common-sense, such as keeps the world jogging on, ready to endure the ills it has rather than fly to others it knows not of.

The book is in the form of a dialogue between Jack Anvil, the blacksmith, and Tom Hood, the mason.

"Tom. But have you read the *Rights of Man?*

"Jack. No, not I: I had rather by half read the *Whole Duty of Man.* I have but little time for reading, and such as I should therefore only read a bit of the best."

. . . . . .

"Tom. And what dost thou take a *democrat* to be?

"JACK. One who likes to be governed by a thousand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king."

. . . . . .

"TOM. What is it to be *an enlightened people?*

"JACK. To put out the light of the Gospel, confound right and wrong, and grope about in pitch darkness."

. . . . . .

"TOM. And what is *benevolence?*

"JACK. Why, in the new-fangled language, it means contempt of religion, aversion to justice, overturning of law, doating on all mankind in general, and hating everybody in particular."

For a long time the authorship of the book remained a secret, and Will Chip became a notable figure. The clergy and the land-owners in particular rejoiced over his homely common-sense, and distributed these pamphlets broadcast over the land. One hundred thousand copies were sold in a short time. *Village Politics* is said to have been one of the strongest influences in England to awaken the common people to the dangers which lie in a sudden overthrow of government. The book was timely, for that decade had become intoxicated by the name of Liberty. To-day democracy and equality are no longer feared.

During many years Hannah More worked industriously among the poor of Cheddar and

its vicinity. On a visit to the Cliffs of Cheddar she found an ignorant, half-savage people, many of whom dwelt in the caves and fissures of the rocks, and earned a miserable subsistence by selling stalactites and other minerals native to the place, to the travellers who were attracted thither by the beautiful scenery. Among these people Hannah More opened a Sunday-school, and later a day school, where the girls were taught knitting, spinning, and sewing. A girl trained in her school was presented on her marriage day with five shillings, a pair of white stockings, and a new Bible. The teaching in the schools was so practical that within a year schools were opened in nine parishes.

In this missionary work, Miss More became intimately acquainted not only with the very poor, but also with the rich farmers living in the neighbourhood and the prosperous tradespeople of the villages. From these better educated men she met with great opposition. One petty landlord met her request for assistance with the remark: "The lower classes are fated to be poor, ignorant and wicked; and wise as you are, you cannot alter what is decreed." Another man informed her that religion was the worst thing for the poor, it made them so lazy and useless.

But the minds of the people had been awakened by the French Revolution. They were begin-

ning to think. Books and ballads attacking church and constitution were hawked through the country and placed within reach of all. To counteract the influence of these "corrupt and inflammatory publications" Hannah More, between the years 1795–1798, published *The Cheap Repository*, the first regular issue of this kind. Every month a story, a ballad, and a tract for Sunday were published. Hannah More knew so well the common reasoning and the mental attitude of those for whom she wrote, that she was able to make her lessons most effective. So great was the demand for these chap-books that over two million were sold the first year.[1]

These stories were divided into two classes, those for "persons of middle rank" and those for the common people. The former point out the dangers of pride and covetousness; of substituting abstract philosophy for religion; and warn masters not to forget their moral obligations towards their servants. The latter aim to teach neatness, sobriety, regularity in church attendance, and point out the happiness of those who follow these precepts, and the misery of those who neglect them.

[1] For a complete bibliography of these chap-books, see the *Catalogue of English and American Chap-Books* in Harvard College Library, pp. 8–10; compiled in part by Charles Welsh.

Her two best known stories are *Mr. Fantom* and *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. Mr. Fantom: or the History of the New-Fashioned Philosopher, and his Man William* was written to warn masters of the danger of teaching their servants disrespect for the Bible and for civil law. Mr. Fantom was a shallow man, who glided upon the surface of philosophy and culled those precepts which relieved his conscience from any moral obligations. When he was asked to help the poor in his own parish, he refused to consider their wants because his mind was so engrossed by the partition of Poland. Like Mrs. Jellyby of a later time, he was so much troubled by sufferings which he could not see that he neglected his family and servants. When he reprimanded his butler, William, for being intoxicated, the young man replied: "Why, sir, you are a philosopher, you know; and I have often overheard you say to your company, that private vices are public benefits; and so I thought that getting drunk was as pleasant a way of doing good to the public as any, especially when I could oblige my muster at the same time." In course of time William became a thief and a murderer, and expiated his crimes on the scaffold.

In contrast to this is *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.* This shepherd was contented with his lot, and says: "David was happier when he

kept his father's sheep on such a plain as this, and employed in singing some of his own psalms perhaps, than ever he was when he became king of Israel and Judah. And I dare say we should never have had some of the most beautiful texts in all those fine psalms, if he had not been a shepherd, which enabled him to make so many fine comparisons and similitudes, as one may say, from country life, flocks of sheep, hills and valleys, fields of corn, and fountains of water." The shepherd's neat cottage with its simple furnishings, his frugal wife and industrious children are described in simple and convincing language.

In the stories of the poor there are many interesting details of the everyday life of that class that did not blossom into heroes and heroines of romance for nearly half a century. Mrs. Sponge, in *The History of Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl*, is a character that Dickens might have immortalised. Mrs. Sponge kept a little shop and a kind of eating-house for poor girls near the Seven Dials. She received stolen goods, and made such large profits in her business that she was enabled to become a broker among the poor. She loaned Betty five shillings to set her up in the orange business; she did not ask for the return of her money, but exacted a sixpence a day for its use, and was regarded by Betty, and the other girls whom

she thus befriended, as a benefactor. At last, Betty was rescued from the clutches of Mrs. Sponge. By industry and piety she became mistress of a handsome sausage-shop near the Seven Dials, and married a hackney coachman, the hero of one of Miss More's ballads:

I am a bold coachman, and drive a good hack
With a coat of five capes that quite covers my back;
And my wife keeps a sausage-shop, not many miles
From the narrowest alley in all broad St. Giles.
Though poor, we are honest and very content,
We pay as we go, for meat, drink, and for rent;
To work all the week I am able and willing,
I never get drunk, and I waste not a shilling;
And while at a tavern my gentleman tarries,
The coachman grows richer than he whom he carries,
And I 'd rather (said I), since it saves me from sin,
Be the driver without, than the toper within.

The Cheap Repository was written to teach moral precepts. Neither Hannah More nor her readers saw any artistic beauty in the sordid lives of this lower stratum of society. They were not interested in the superstitions of "Poor Sally Evans," who hung a plant called "midsummer-men" in her room on Midsummer eve so that she might learn by the bending of the leaves if her lover were true to her, and who consulted all the fortune-tellers that came to her door to learn whether the two moles on her cheek foretold two husbands or two children.

Hannah More recorded these simple fancies of poor Sally only to show her folly and the misfortunes that afterwards befell her on account of her superstitions. Writers of that century either laughed at the ignorant blunders of the poor, or used them to point a moral. An interest in them because they are human beings like ourselves with common frailties belongs to the next century. Nothing proves more conclusively the growth of the democratic idea than the changed attitude of the novel toward the ignorant and the criminal.

Hannah More was always interested in the education of young ladies. She wrote a series of essays called *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, in which she protested loudly against the tendency to give girls an ornamental rather than a useful education. This was so highly approved that she was asked to make suggestions for the education of the Princess Charlotte. This led to her writing *Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess*.

Hannah More finally embodied her theories on the education of women in a book which she thought might appeal most strongly to the young ladies themselves, *Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*. Running through it, is a slight romance. Cœlebs, filled with admiration for Eve, as described

in *Paradise Lost*, where she is intent on her household duties, goes forth into the world to find, if possible, such a helpmate for himself. As he meets different women, he compares them with his ideal, and, finding them lacking, passes a severe criticism upon female education and accomplishments. Finally, he meets a lady with well-trained mind, who delights in works of charity and piety, one well calculated to conduct wisely the affairs of his household. She has besides proper humility, and accepts with gratitude the honour of becoming Cœlebs's wife.

Until her death at the advanced age of eighty-eight years, Hannah More continued to write moral and religious essays, so that she was before the public view for over fifty years. Mrs. S. C. Hall in her book *Pilgrimages to English Shrines* thus describes her in old age:

"Hannah More wore a dress of very light green silk—a white China crape shawl was folded over her shoulders; her white hair was frizzled, after a by-gone fashion, above her brow, and that *backed*, as it were, by a very full double border of rich lace. The reality was as dissimilar from the picture painted by our imagination as anything could well be; such a sparkling, light, bright, 'summery'-looking old lady—more like a beneficent fairy, than the biting author of *Mr. Fantom*, though in perfect harmony with *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*."

CHAPTER V

Charlotte Smith. Mrs. Inchbald

WHILE Hannah More was endeavouring to improve the condition of the poor by teaching them diligence and sobriety, a group of earnest men and women were writing books and pamphlets in which they claimed that poverty and ignorance were due to unjust laws. The writings of Voltaire and Rousseau had filled their minds with bright pictures of a democracy. These theories were considered most dangerous in England, but they were the theories which helped to shape the American constitution. Among these English revolutionists were William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Inchbald, and for a time Amelia Opie.

The strongest political novel was *Caleb Williams* by William Godwin. In this he shows how through law man may become the destroyer of man. This interest in the rights of man awakened interest in the condition of women; and Mary Wollstonecraft, who afterward

became Mrs. Godwin, wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* This pamphlet was declared contrary to the Bible and to Christian law, although all its demands have now been conceded. Charlotte Smith was also interested in the position of women and the laws affecting them. In *Desmond* she discussed freely a marriage problem which in her day seemed very bold, while in her private life she ignored British prejudices.

She was the mother of twelve children and the wife of a man of many schemes, so that she was continually devising ways to extricate her large family from the financial difficulties into which he plunged them. At one time a friend suggested to her that her husband's attention should be turned toward religion. Her reply was: "Oh, for heaven's sake, do not put it into his head to take to religion, for if he does, he will instantly begin by building a cathedral." She is supposed to have caricatured him in the projector who hoped to make a fortune by manuring his estate with old wigs. But when her husband was imprisoned for debt, she shared his captivity, and began to write to support her family. Although she died at the age of fifty-seven, she found time during her manifold cares to write thirty-eight volumes.

But not only did Mrs. Smith endure sorrows as great as those of her favourite heroine, Sidney

Biddulph, but one of her daughters was equally unfortunate. She was married unhappily, and returned with her three children for her mother to support. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, after twenty-three years of married life, agreed to live in separate countries, he in Normandy, and she in England, although they always corresponded and were interested in each other's welfare. Yet this separation, together with the revolutionary tendencies discovered in her writings, raised a storm of criticism against her.

In *Desmond*, which was regarded as so dangerous, Mrs. Smith has presented the following problem: Geraldine, the heroine, is married to a spendthrift, who attempts to retrieve his fortunes by forcing his wife to become the mistress of his friend, the rich Duc de Romagnecourt. To preserve her honour she leaves him, hoping to return to her mother's roof; but her mother refuses to receive her and bids her return to her husband. As she dares not do this, and is without money, a faithful friend, Desmond, takes her under his protection, asking no reward but the pleasure of serving her. Finally Geraldine receives a letter informing her that her husband is ill. She returns to him, and nurses him until he dies; after a year of mourning she marries Desmond.

How could a woman have behaved more virtuously than Geraldine? She is always high-

minded and actuated by the purest motives. But it was feared that her example might encourage wives to desert their husbands, and consequently the novel was declared immoral.

Desmond was published in 1792, when the feeling against France was very bitter in England. The plot, as it meanders slowly through three volumes, is constantly interrupted by political discussions. The author's clearly expressed preference for a republican government, and her criticism of English law, met with bitter disapproval. One of the characters pronounces a panegyric upon the greater prosperity and happiness that has come to the French soldiers, farmers, and peasants, since they came to believe that they were sharers in their own labours, and the hero of the book, writing from France to a friend in England, says: "I lament still more the disposition which too many Englishmen show to join in this unjust and infamous crusade, against the holy standard of freedom; and I blush for my country." In the same book, the author censures the penal laws of England, by which robbery to the amount of forty shillings is punishable with death; and criticises the delay of the courts in dealing justice.

This criticism is expressed tamely, barely more than suggested, when compared with the vigorous attacks which Dickens made in the

next century on English law and the slow action of justice in the famous "Circumlocution Office." Dickens wrote with such vigour that he brought about a reform. A modern reader finds *Desmond* earnest and sincere, but tame to the point of dulness. It seems strange how the Tory party could see in this book a menace to the British constitution. But a writer in the *Monthly Review* for December, 1792, advocated her cause. "She is very justly of opinion," he writes, "that the great events that are passing in the world are no less interesting to women than to men, and that, in her solicitude to discharge the domestic duties, a woman ought not to forget that, in common with her father and husband, her brothers and sons, she is a citizen."

The publication of *The Old Manor House* in the following year won back for her many of the friends that she had lost by *Desmond*. But in this work also the same love of liberty, the same indifference to social distinctions, occur. The hero of *The Old Manor House* joins the English army, and is sent to fight against the Americans; in the many reflections upon this conflict, the author shows that her sympathies are with the colonists. The father of the hero had married a young woman who had nothing to recommend her but "beauty, simplicity, and goodness." The hero himself falls in love with and marries a girl beneath him in rank, but he does not seem

to feel that he has done a generous thing, nor does the heroine show any gratitude for this honour. Each seems unconscious that their difference in rank should be a bar to their union, provided they do not offend old Mrs. Rayland, the owner of the manor. A great change had come over the novel since Pamela was overpowered with gratitude to her profligate master, Mr. B, for condescending to make her his wife.

The revolutionary principles of Mrs. Smith's novels were soon forgotten, but two new elements were introduced by her that bore fruit in English fiction. Her great gift to the novel was the portrayal of refined, quiet, intellectual ladies, beside whom Evelina and Cecilia seem but school-girls. Her heroines may be poor, they may be of inferior rank, but they are always ladies of sensitive nature and cultivated manners, and are drawn with a feeling and tenderness which no novelist before her had reached. A contemporary said of Emmeline, "All is graceful, and pleasing to the sight, all, in short, is simple, femininely beautiful and chaste." This might be said of all the women she has created. Old Mrs. Rayland, the central personage in her most popular novel, *The Old Manor House*, notwithstanding her exalted ideas of her own importance as a member of the Rayland family, and the arbitrary manner in which she compels all to conform to her old-

fashioned notions, is always the high-born lady. We smile at her, but she never forfeits our respect. Scott said of her, "Old Mrs. Rayland is without a peer."

Mrs. Smith's second gift to the novel was her charming descriptions of rural scenery. Nature had for a long time been banished from the arts. Wordsworth in one of his prefaces wrote:

"Excepting *The Nocturnal Reverie* of Lady Winchelsea, and a passage or two in the *Windsor Forest* of Pope, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of *Paradise Lost* and *The Seasons* does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one, from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination."

Fiction was as barren of scenery as poetry. None of the novelists were cognisant of the country scenes amid which their plots were laid, with the possible exception of Goldsmith. *The Vicar of Wakefield* has a rural setting, and there are references to the trees, the blackbirds, and the hayfields; but description is not introduced for the sake of its own beauty as in the novels of Charlotte Smith. In *Ethelinda* there are beautiful descriptions of the English Lakes, part of the scene being laid at Grasmere;

Celestina is in the romantic Provence; *Desmond* in Normandy; and in *The Old Manor House* we have the soft landscape of the south of England.

In *The Old Manor House* she thus describes one of the paths that led from the gate of the park to Rayland Hall:

"The other path, which in winter or in wet seasons was inconvenient, wound down a declivity, where furze and fern were shaded by a few old hawthorns and self-sown firs: out of the hill several streams were filtered, which, uniting at its foot, formed a large and clear pond of near twenty acres, fed by several imperceptible currents from other eminences which sheltered that side of the park; and the bason between the hills and the higher parts of it being thus filled, the water found its way over a stony boundary, where it was passable by a foot bridge unless in time of floods; and from thence fell into a lower part of the ground, where it formed a considerable river; and, winding among willows and poplars for near a mile, again spread into a still larger lake, on the edge of which was a mill, and opposite, without the park paling, wild heaths, where the ground was sandy, broken, and irregular, still however marked by plantations made in it by the Rayland family."

Every feature of the landscape is brought

distinctly before the eye. Such descriptions are not unusual now, but they were first used by Charlotte Smith.

Even more realistic is the picture of a road in a part of the New Forest near Christchurch:

"It was a deep, hollow road, only wide enough for waggons, and was in some places shaded by hazel and other brush wood; in others, by old beech and oaks, whose roots wreathed about the bank, intermingled with ivy, holly, and evergreen fern, almost the only plants that appeared in a state of vegetation, unless the pale and sallow mistletoe, which here and there partially tinted with faint green the old trees above them.

. . . . . .

"Everything was perfectly still around; even the robin, solitary songster of the frozen woods, had ceased his faint vespers to the setting sun, and hardly a breath of air agitated the leafless branches. This dead silence was interrupted by no sound but the slow progress of his horse, as the hollow ground beneath his feet sounded as if he trod on vaults. There was in the scene, and in this dull pause of nature, a solemnity not unpleasant to Orlando, in his present disposition of mind."

In 1842, Miss Mitford wrote to Miss Barrett: "Charlotte Smith's works, with all their faults, have yet a love of external nature, and a power

of describing it, which I never take a spring walk without feeling." And again she wrote to a friend referring to Mrs. Smith, "Except that they want cheerfulness, nothing can exceed the beauty of the style."

The life and writings of Mrs. Inchbald had some things in common with the life and writings of Mrs. Smith. Both were obliged to write to support themselves as well as those dependent upon them. Both had seen many phases of human nature, and both viewed with scorn the pretensions of the rich and beheld with pity the sorrows of the poor. Both were champions of social and political equality. Mrs. Inchbald, however, was an actress and a successful playwright, hence her novels are the more dramatic, but they lack the beautiful rural setting which gives a poetic atmosphere to the writings of Charlotte Smith.

A Simple Story, the first of Mrs. Inchbald's two novels, has been called the precursor of *Jane Eyre*. It is the first novel in which we are more interested in what is felt than in what actually happens. Mr. Dorriforth, a Catholic priest, and Miss Milner, his ward, fall in love with each other, and we watch this hidden passion, which preys upon the health of both. He is horrified that he has broken his vows; she is mortified that she loves a man who, she believes, neither

can nor does return her feeling for him. When he is released from his vow, it is the emotion, not external happenings, that holds the interest. The first part of the story is brought to a close with the marriage of Mr. Dorriforth, now Lord Elmwood, and Miss Milner.

Seventeen years elapse between the two halves of the novel. During this time trouble has come between them and they have separated. The character of each has undergone a change. Traits of disposition that were first but lightly observed have been intensified with years. Mrs. Inchbald writes of the hero: "Dorriforth, the pious, the good, the tender Dorriforth, is become a hard-hearted tyrant; the compassionate, the feeling, the just Lord Elmwood, an example of implacable rigour and justice." His friend Sandford has also changed with the years, but he has been softened, not hardened by them — "the reprover, the enemy of the vain, the idle, and the wicked, but the friend and comforter of the forlorn and miserable."

The story of Dorriforth gives unity to the two parts of the novel. The conflict between his love and his anger holds the reader in suspense until the conclusion. The characters of eighteenth-century fiction were actuated by but a small number of motives. In nearly all the novels the men were either generous and free or stingy and hypocritical; the women were

either virtuous and winsome, or immoral and brazen. Mrs. Inchbald possessed, only in a less degree, George Eliot's power of character-analysis; she observed minor qualities, and she was as unflinching in following the development of evil traits to a tragic conclusion as was the author of *Adam Bede*.

In *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1791, some one wrote of *A Simple Story:*

"She has struck out a path entirely her own. She has disdained to follow the steps of her predecessors, and to construct a new novel, as is too commonly done, out of the scraps and fragments of earlier inventors. Her principal character, the Roman Catholic lord, is perfectly new: and she has conducted him, through a series of surprising well-contrasted adventures, with an uniformity of character and truth of description that have rarely been surpassed."

There is, however, one hackneyed scene. A young girl is seized, thrust into a chariot, and carried at full speed to a lonely place. There is hardly an early novel where this bald incident is not worked up into one or more chapters, with variations to suit the convenience of the plot. It was as much a part of the stock in trade of the novelist of the eighteenth century as a family quarrel is of the twentieth. With this exception, *A Simple Story* is new in its plot, incidents, characters, and mode of treatment.

Emotion did not play so important a part in a novel again until Charlotte Brontë wrote *Jane Eyre*.

Mrs. Inchbald's only other novel, *Nature and Art*, shows the artificialities of society. Two cousins, William and Henry, are contrasted. William is the son of a dean. Henry's father went to Africa to live, whence he sent his son to his rich uncle to be educated. Henry fails to comprehend the society in which he finds himself placed, and cannot understand that there should be any poor people.

" 'Why, here is provision enough for all the people,' said Henry; 'why should they want? why do not they go and take some of these things?'

" 'They must not,' said the dean, 'unless they were their own.'

" 'What, Uncle! Does no part of the earth, nor anything which the earth produces, belong to the poor?' "

His uncle fails to answer this question to his nephew's satisfaction.

The vices and the fawning duplicity of William are contrasted with the virtues and independent spirit of Henry.

" 'I know I am called proud,' one day said William to Henry.

" 'Dear Cousin,' replied Henry, 'it must be only then by those who do not know you; for

to me you appear the humblest creature in the world.'

"'Do you really think so?'

"'I am certain of it; or would you always give up your opinion to that of persons in a superior state, however inferior in their understanding? . . . I have more pride than you, for I will never stoop to act or to speak contrary to my feelings.'"

William rises to eminence, in time becoming a judge. Henry, who is always virtuous, can obtain no preferment. This contrast in the two cousins is not so overdrawn as at first appears. William represents the aristocracy of the old world; Henry, the free representative of a new country.

A tragic story runs through the novel, which becomes intensely dramatic at the point where William puts on his black cap to pronounce sentence on the girl whom he had ruined years before. He does not recognise her; but she, who had loved him through the years, becomes insane, not at the thought of death, but that he should be the one to pronounce the sentence. It is doubtful if any novelist before Scott had produced so thrilling a situation, a situation which grew naturally out of the plot, and the anguish of the poor unfortunate Agnes has the realism of Thomas Hardy or Tolstoi.

Only by reading these old novels can one

comprehend the change produced in England by the next half-century. The teachings of Mrs. Charlotte Smith and Mrs. Inchbald were declared dangerous to the state. That they taught disrespect for authority, was one of the many charges brought against them. Yet with what ladylike reserve they advance views which a later generation applauded when boldly proclaimed by Dickens, Thackeray, and Disraeli!

CHAPTER VI

Clara Reeve. Ann Radcliffe. Harriet and Sophia Lee

THE novel of the mysterious and the supernatural did not appear in modern literature until Horace Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, during the decade that was dominated by the realism of Smollett and Sterne. The author says it was an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient, which was all improbable, and the modern, which was a realistic copy of nature. The machinery of this novel is clumsy. An enormous helmet and a huge sword are the means by which an ancestor of Otranto, long since dead, restores the castle to a seeming peasant, who proves to be the rightful heir.

This book produced no imitators until 1777, when Clara Reeve wrote *The Old English Baron*, which was plainly suggested by Walpole's novel, but is more delicate in the treatment of its ghostly visitants. Here, as in *The Castle*

of Otranto, the rightful heir has been brought up a peasant, ignorant of his high birth. Again his ancestors, supposedly dead and gone, bring him into his own. One night he is made to sleep in the haunted part of the castle, where his parents reveal to him in a dream things which he is later able to prove legally. He learns the truth about his birth, comes into his estate, and wins the lady of his heart. When he returns to the castle as its master, all the doors fly open through the agency of unseen hands to welcome their feudal lord.

The characters of both these novels are without interest, and the mysterious element fails to produce the slightest creepy thrill.

Twelve years passed before Walpole's novel found another imitator in Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, who so far excelled her two predecessors that she has been called the founder of the Gothic romance, and in this field she remains without a peer. In her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, as in *The Old English Baron* by Clara Reeve, a peasant renowned for his courage and virtue loves and is beloved by a lady of rank. A strawberry mark on his arm proves that he is the Baron Malcolm and owner of the castle of Dunbayne, at which juncture amid great rejoicings the story ends.

The characters and the style foreshadow Mrs.

Radcliffe's later work. The usurping Baron of Dunbayne, who has imprisoned in his castle the women who might oppose his ambition; the two melancholy widows; their gentle and pensive daughters; their brave, loyal, and virtuous sons in love respectively with the two daughters; the Count Santmorin, bold and passionate, who endeavours by force to carry off the woman he loves—these are types that Mrs. Radcliffe repeatedly developed until in her later novels they became real men and women with strong conflicting emotions.

But superior to all her other powers is her ability to awaken a feeling of the presence of the supernatural. The castle of Dunbayne has secret doors and subterranean passages. The mysterious sound, as of a lute, is wafted on the air from an unknown source. Alleyn, in endeavouring to escape through a secret passage, stumbles over something in the dark, and, on stooping to learn what it is, finds the cold hand of a corpse in his grasp. This dead man has nothing to do with the story, but is introduced merely to make the reader shudder, which Mrs. Radcliffe never fails to do, even after we have learned all the secrets of her art. We learn later in the book how the corpse happened to be left here unburied; for in that day of intense realism, half-way between the ancient belief in ghosts and the modern interest in mental

suggestion, every occurrence outside the known laws of physics was greeted with a cynical smile. But, although Mrs. Radcliffe always explains the mystery in her books, we hold our breath whenever she designs that we shall.

The Sicilian Romance, *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *The Italian* were written and published during the next seven years and each one shows a marked artistic advance over its predecessor. With the opening paragraph of each, we are carried at once into the land of the unreal, into regions of poetry rather than of prose. Rugged mountains with their concealed valleys, whispering forests which the eye cannot penetrate, Gothic ruins with vaulted chambers and subterranean passages, are the scenes of her stories; while event after event of her complicated plot happens either just as the mists of evening are obscuring the sun, or while the moonlight is throwing fantastic shadows over the landscape. It is an atmosphere of mystery in which one feels the weird presence of the supernatural. This is heightened by the ghostly suggestions she brings to the mind, as incorporeal as spirits. A low hurried breathing in the dark, lights flashing out from unexpected places, forms gliding noiselessly along the dark corridors, a word of warning from an unseen source, cause

the reader to wait with hushed attention for the unfolding of the mystery.

Sometimes the solution is trivial. The reader and the inmates of Udolpho are held in suspense chapter after chapter by some terrible appearance behind a black veil. When Emily ventures to draw the curtain, she drops senseless to the ground. But this appearance turns out to be merely a wax effigy placed there by chance. Often the explanation is more satisfactory. The disappearance of Ludovico during the night from the haunted chamber where he was watching in hopes of meeting the spirits that infested it, makes the most sceptical believe for a time in the reality of the ghostly visitants; and his reappearance at the close of the book, the slave of pirates who had found a secret passage leading from the sea to this room, and had used it as a place of rendezvous, is declared by Sir Walter Scott to meet all the requirements of romance.

But by a series of strange coincidences and dreams Mrs. Radcliffe still makes us feel that the destiny of her characters is shaped by an unseen power. Adeline is led by chance to the very ruin where her unknown father had been murdered years before. She sees in dreams all the incidents of the deed, and a manuscript he had written while in the power of his enemies falls into her hands. Again by chance she

finds an asylum in the home of a clergyman, Arnaud La Luc, who proves to be the father of her lover, Theodore Peyrou. It seems to be by the interposition of Providence that Ellena finds her mother and is recognised by her father. So in every tale we are made aware of powers not mortal shaping human destiny.

Mrs. Radcliffe adds to this consciousness of the presence of the supernatural by another, perhaps more legitimate, method. She felt what Wordsworth expressed in *Tintern Abbey*, written the year after her last novel was published:

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

Mrs. Radcliffe seldom loses her feeling for nature, and has a strong sense of the effect of environment on her characters. Julia, when in doubt about the fate of Hippolitus, often walked in the evening under the shade of the high trees that environed the abbey. "The dewy coolness of the air refreshed her. The innumerable roseate tints which the parting

sun-beams reflected on the rocks above, and the fine vermil glow diffused over the romantic scene beneath, softly fading from the eye as the night shades fell, excited sensations of a sweet and tranquil nature, and soothed her into a temporary forgetfulness of her sorrow." As the happy lovers, Vivaldi and Ellena, are gliding along the Bay of Naples, they hear from the shore the voices of the vine-dressers, as they repose after the labours of the day, and catch the strains of music from fishermen who are dancing on the margin of the sea.

Sometimes nature is prophetic. The whole description of the castle of Udolpho, when Emily first beholds it, is symbolical of the sufferings she is to endure there: "As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From these, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared invade its solitary reign." When Emily is happy in the peasant's home in the valley below, she lingers at the casement after the sun has set: "But a clear moonlight that succeeded gave to the landscape what time

gives to the scenes of past life, when it softens all their harsh features, and throws over the whole the mellowing shade of distant contemplation." It is this feeling for nature as a constant presence in daily life, now elating the mind with joy, now awakening a sense of foreboding or inspiring terror, and again soothing the mind to repose, that gives to her books a permanent hold upon the imagination and marks their author as a woman of genius.

In her response to nature, she belongs to the Lake School. Scott said of her: "Mrs. Radcliffe has a title to be considered as the first poetess of romantic fiction, that is, if actual rhythm shall not be deemed essential to poetry." Mrs. Smith describes nature as we all know it, as it appears on the canvasses of Constable and Wilson. Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions of ideal and romantic nature have earned for her the name of the English Salvator Rosa.

Mrs. Radcliffe's characters are not without interest, although they are often mere types. All her heroes and heroines are ladies and gentlemen of native courtesy, superior education, and accomplishments. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* she has set forth the education which St. Aubert gave to his daughter, Emily: "St. Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences, and an exact acquaintance

with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. She discovered in her early years a taste for works of genius; and it was St. Aubert's principle, as well as his inclination, to promote every innocent means of happiness. 'A well informed mind,' he would say, 'is the best security against the contagion of vice and folly.'"

In all their circumstances her characters are well-bred. This type has been nearly lost in literature, due, perhaps, to the minuter study of manners and the analysis of character. When an author surveys his ladies and gentlemen through a reading-glass, and points the finger at their oddities and pries into their inmost secrets, even the Chesterfields become awkward and clownish. But Mrs. Radcliffe, like Mrs. Smith, is a true gentlewoman, and speaks of her characters with the delicate respect of true gentility. Julia, Adeline, Emily, and Ellena, the heroines of four of her books, love nature, and while away the melancholy hours by playing on the lute or writing poetry, and are, moreover, well qualified to have charge of a baronial castle and its dependencies. Her heroes are worthy of her heroines. As they are generally seen in the presence of ladies, if they have vices there is no occasion for their display.

It is only in the characters of her villains

that good and evil are intertwined, and she awakens our sympathy for them equally with our horror. Monsieur La Motte, a weak man in the power of an unscrupulous one, is the best drawn character in *The Romance of the Forest.* He has taken Adeline under his protection and has been as a father to her. But before this he had committed a crime which has placed his life in the hands of a powerful marquis. To free himself he consents to surrender Adeline to the marquis, who has become enamoured of her beauty, hoping by the sacrifice of her honour to save his own life. He is agitated in the presence of Adeline, and trembles at the approach of any stranger. Scott said of him, "He is the exact picture of the needy man who has seen better days."

In *The Italian,* Schedoni, a monk of the order of Black Penitents for whom the novel is named, is guilty of the most atrocious crimes in order that he may further his own ambition, but he is not devoid of natural feeling. Scott says the scene in which he "is in the act of raising his arm to murder his sleeping victim, and discovers her to be his own child, is of a new, grand, and powerful character; and the horrors of the wretch who, on the brink of murder, has just escaped from committing a crime of yet more exaggerated horror, constitute the strongest painting which has been produced by Mrs.

Radcliffe's pencil, and form a crisis well fitted to be actually embodied on canvas by some great master."

Every book has one or more gloomy, deep-plotting villains. But all the people of rank bear unmistakable marks of their nobility, even when their natures have become depraved by crime. In this she is the equal of Scott.

In every ruined abbey and castle there is a servant who brings in a comic element and relieves the strained feelings. Peter, Annette, and Paulo are all faithful but garrulous, and often bring disaster upon their masters by overzeal in their service.

When Vivaldi, the hero of *The Italian*, is brought before the tribunal of the inquisition, his faithful servant, Paulo, rails bitterly at the treatment his master has received. Vivaldi, well knowing the danger which they both incur by too free speech, bids him speak in a whisper:

"'A whisper,' shouted Paulo, 'I scorn to speak in a whisper. I will speak so loud that every word I say shall ring in the ears of all those old black devils on the benches yonder, ay, and those on that mountebank stage, too, that sit there looking so grim and angry, as if they longed to tear us in pieces. They—'

"'Silence,' said Vivaldi with emphasis. 'Paulo, I command you to be silent.'

"'They shall know a bit of my mind,' contin-

ued Paulo, without noticing Vivaldi. 'I will tell them what they have to expect from all their cruel usage of my poor master. Where do they expect to go to when they die, I wonder? Though for that matter, they can scarcely go to a worse place than that they are in already, and I suppose it is knowing that which makes them not afraid of being ever so wicked. They shall hear a little plain truth for once in their lives, however; they shall hear—' "

But by this time Paulo is dragged from the room.

The plots of all Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are complicated. A whole skein is knotted and must be unravelled thread by thread. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the most involved. Characters are introduced that are for a time apparently forgotten; one sub-plot appears within another, but at the end each is found necessary to the whole.

The Italian is simpler than the others: the plot is less involved, and there are many strong situations. The opening sentence at once arouses the interests of the reader: "Within the shade of the portico, a person with folded arms, and eyes directed towards the ground, was pacing behind the pillars the whole extent of the pavement, and was apparently so engaged by his own thoughts as not to observe that strangers were approaching. He

turned, however, suddenly, as if startled by the sound of steps, and then, without further pausing, glided to a door that opened into the church, and disappeared." Another scene in which the Marchesa Vivaldi and Schedoni are plotting the death of Ellena, is justly famous. The former is actuated by the desire to prevent her son's marriage to a woman of inferior rank; the latter hopes that he may gain an influence over the powerful Marchesa that will lead to his promotion in the church. Their conference, which takes place in the choir of the convent of San Nicolo, is broken in upon by the faint sound of the organ followed by slow voices chanting the first requiem for the dead.

The Italian is generally considered the strongest of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. It was published in 1797, and was as enthusiastically received as were its predecessors, but for some reason it was the last book Mrs. Radcliffe published. Neither the fame it brought her, nor the eight hundred pounds she received for it from her publishers, tempted its author from her life of retirement. Publicity was distasteful to her. At the age of thirty-four, at an age when many novelists had written nothing, she ceased from writing, and spent the rest of her years either in travel or in the seclusion of her own home.

The novel at this time was not considered seriously as a work of art, and Mrs. Radcliffe may have considered that she was but trifling with time by employing her pen in that way. In looking over the book reviews in *The Gentlemen's Magazine* for the years from 1790 to 1800, it is significant that, while column after column is spent in lavish praise of a book of medicine or science which the next generation proved to be false, and of poetry that had no merit except that its feet could be counted, seldom is a novel reviewed in its pages. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was criticised for its lengthy descriptions, and *The Italian* was ignored.

The direct influence of these novels on the literature of the nineteenth century cannot be estimated. Mrs. Radcliffe's influence upon her contemporaries can be more easily traced. The year after the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* Lewis wrote *The Monk*. This has all the horrors but none of the refined delicacy of Mrs. Radcliffe's work. Robert Charles Maturin borrowed many suggestions from her, and the gentle satire of *Northanger Abbey* could never have been written if Jane Austen had not herself come under the influence of *The Romance of the Forest*.

But her greatest influence was upon Scott. The four great realistic novelists of the eighteenth century, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and

Sterne whose influence can be so often traced in Thackeray and Dickens, seem never to have touched the responsive nature of Scott. He edited their works and often spoke in their praise, but that which was deepest and truest in him, which gave birth to his poetry and his novels, seems never to have been aware of their existence. Mrs. Radcliffe and Maria Edgewood were his most powerful teachers.

Andrew Lang in the introduction to *Rob Roy* in the Border edition of the *Waverley Novels* calls attention to the fact that Waverley, Guy Mannering, Lovel of *The Antiquary*, and Frank Osbaldistone were all poets. Not only these men, but others, as Edward Glendinning and Edgar Ravenswood, bear a strong family resemblance to Theodore Peyrou, Valancourt, and Vivaldi, as well as to some of the other less important male characters in Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. Scott's men stand forth more clearly drawn, while Mrs. Radcliffe's are often but dimly outlined. Ellen Douglas, the daughter of an exiled family; the melancholy Flora MacIvor, who whiled away her hours by translating Highland poetry into English; Mary Avenel, dwelling in a remote castle, are all refined, educated gentlewomen such as Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Radcliffe delighted in, and are placed in situations similar to those in which Julia, Adeline, and Emily are found.

But the heroines of Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Radcliffe have a quality which not even Scott has been able to give to his women. It is expressed by a word often used during the reign of the Georges, but since gone out of fashion. They were women of fine sensibilities. Johnson defines this as quickness of feeling, and it has been used to mean a quickness of perception of the soul as distinguished from the intellect. The sensibilities of women may not be finer than those of men, but they respond to a greater variety of emotions. This gives to them a certain evanescent quality which we find in Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Eyre, Maggie Tulliver, Romola, the portraits of Madame Le Brun and Angelica Kauffman, and the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This quality men have almost never grasped whether working with the pen or the brush. Rosalind, Juliet, Viola, Beatrice, all possess it; and in a less degree, Diana of the Crossways is true to her sex in this respect. But the features of nearly every famous Madonna, no matter how skilful the artist that painted her, are stiff and wooden when looked at from this point of view, and Scott's heroines, with the possible exception of Jeanie Deans, are immobile when compared with woman as portrayed by many an inferior artist of her own sex.

Scott's complicated plots and his constant introduction of characters who are surrounded

by mystery or are living in disguise again suggest Mrs. Radcliffe. Again and again he selected the same scenes that had appealed to her, and in his earlier novels and poems he filled them in with the same details which she had chosen. Perhaps it is due to her influence that all the hills of Scotland, as some critic has observed, become mountains when he touches them: "The sun was nearly set behind the distant mountain of Liddesdale" was the beginning of an early romance to have been entitled *Thomas the Rhymer*. Knockwinnock Bay in *The Antiquary* is first seen at sunset, and it is night when Guy Mannering arrives at Ellangowan Castle. Melrose is described by moonlight. The sun as it sets in the Trossachs brings to the mind of Scott the very outlines and colours which Mrs. Radcliffe had used in giving the first appearance of Udolpho, a scene which Scott has highly praised; while these famous lines of James Fitz-James have caught the very essence of one of her favourite spots:

> On this bold brow, a lordly tower;
> In that soft vale, a lady's bower;
> On yonder meadow, far away,
> The turrets of a cloister grey!
> How blithely might the bugle horn
> Chide, on the lake, the lingering morn!
> How sweet, at eve, the lover's lute
> Chime, when the groves were still and mute!

And, when the midnight moon should lave
Her forehead in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matin's distant hum.

In his later works Scott is tediously prosaic in description, far inferior to Mrs. Radcliffe, and in the romantic description of scenery he never excels her. It would seem to be no mere chance that in his poetry and in his earlier novels he has so often struck the same key as did the author of *The Mysteries of Udolpho.*

Two sisters, Harriet and Sophia Lee, were writing books and finding readers during the time of Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Inchbald, and Mrs. Radcliffe. In 1784, Sophia Lee published a three-volume novel, *The Recess*, a story of the time of Queen Elizabeth, in which Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, and the earls Leicester, Norfolk, and Essex play important rôles. The two heroines are unacknowledged daughters of Mary Queen of Scots and Norfolk, to whom she has been secretly married during her imprisonment in England. Many other situations in the book are equally fictitious.

The historical novels written in France during the reign of Louis XIV paid no heed to chronology, but men and women whom the author knew well were dressed in the garb of historical personages, and various periods of the past were

brought into the space of the story. *The Recess* was not a masquerade, but the plot and characters slightly picture the reign of Elizabeth. This was one of the first novels in which there was an attempt to represent a past age with something like accuracy. As this was one of the first historical novels, using the term in the modern sense, it had perhaps a right to be one of the poorest; for it is impossible to conceive three volumes of print in which there are fewer sentences that leave any impress on the mind than this once popular novel.

Sophia Lee wrote other novels which are said to be worse than this; but in 1797 she and her sister Harriet, who had the greater imagination, published *The Canterbury Tales*. Some of those written by Harriet are excellent. According to the story a group of travellers have met at an inn in Canterbury, where they are delayed on account of a heavy fall of snow. To while away the weary hours of waiting, as they are gathered about the fire in true English fashion, they agree, as did the Canterbury pilgrims of long ago, that each one shall tell a story. But the pilgrims whom Chaucer accompanied to the shrine of Thomas à Becket are accurately described, and between the tales they discuss the stories and exchange lively banter in which the nature of each speaker is clearly revealed. In *The Canterbury Tales* there is little character-

drawing. Any one of the stories might have been told by any one of the narrators, and before the conclusion the authors dropped this device.

In the stories that are told the characters are weak, but the plots are interesting and many of them original and clever. These *Tales* represent the beginning of the modern short story.

In a preface to a complete edition of the *Tales* published in 1832, Harriet Lee wrote:

"Before I finally dismiss the subject, I think I may be permitted to observe that, when these volumes first appeared, a work bearing distinctly the title of *Tales*, professedly adapted to different countries, and either abruptly commencing with, or breaking suddenly into, a sort of dramatic dialogue, was a novelty in the fiction of the day. Innumerable *Tales* of the same stamp, and adapted in the same manner to all classes and all countries, have since appeared; with many of which I presume not to compete in merit, though I think I may fairly claim priority of design and style."

The Canterbury Tales were read and reread a long time after they were written. A critic in *Blackwood's* says of them:

"They exhibit more of that species of invention which, as we have already remarked, was never common in English literature than any of the works of the first-rate novelists

we have named, with the single exception of Fielding."

The most famous story of the collection is *Kruitzener, or the German's Tale.* Part of the story is laid in Silesia during the Thirty Years' War. Frederick Kruitzener, a Bohemian, is the hero, if such a term may be used for so weak a man. In his youth he is thus described:

"The splendour, therefore, which the united efforts of education, fortune, rank, and the merits of his progenitors threw around him, was early mistaken for a personal gift—a sort of emanation proceeding from the lustre of his own endowments, and for which, as he believed, he was indebted to nature, he resolved not to be accountable to man. . . . He was distinguished! —he saw it—he felt it—he was persuaded he should ever be so; and while yet a youth in the house of his father—dependent on his paternal affection, and entitled to demand credit of the world merely for what he was to be—he secretly looked down on that world as made only for him."

The tale traces the troubles which Kruitzener brings upon himself, his misery and his death. It belongs to romantic literature; the mountain scenes, a palace with secret doors, a secret gallery, a false friend, a mysterious murder, all these remind us of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, but the story does not possess her power or her poetic

charm. Ernest Hartley Coleridge said of this tale: "But the *motif*—a son predestined to evil by the weakness and sensuality of his father, a father's punishment for his want of rectitude by the passionate criminality of his son, is the very key-note of tragedy."

Byron read this story when he was about fourteen, and it affected him powerfully. By a strange coincidence Kruitzener bears a strong resemblance to Lord Byron himself. He was proud and melancholy, and, while he led a life of pleasure, his spirits were always wrapped in gloom. "It made a deep impression on me," writes Byron, "and may, indeed, be said to contain the germ of much that I have since written." In 1821, he dramatised it under the title of *Werner, or the Inheritance*. The play follows the novel closely both in plot and conversation. An editor of Byron's works wrote of it: "There is not one incident in his play, not even the most trivial, that is not in Miss Lee's novel. And then as to the characters—not only is every one of them to be found in *Kruitzener*, but every one is there more fully and powerfully developed."

The Landlady's Tale is far superior to all others in the collection, if judged by present-day standards. This story of sin and its punishment reminds one in its moral earnestness of George Eliot. Mr. Mandeville had brought

ruin upon a poor girl, Mary Lawson, whose own child died, when she became the wet nurse of Robert, Mr. Mandeville's legitimate son and heir. Mary grew to love the boy, but, when the father threatened to expose her character unless she would continue to be his mistress, she ran away, taking the infant with her. She became a servant in a lodging-house in Weymouth, where she lived for fifteen years, respected and beloved. At the end of that time, Mr. Mandeville came to the house as a lodger, where he neither recognised Mary nor knew his son. But he disliked Robert, and paid no heed to the fact that one of his own servants was leading the boy into evil ways. When Robert was accused of a crime which his own servant had committed, he saw him sent to prison and later transported with indifference. The grief of the father when he learned that Robert was his own child was most poignant, and his unavailing efforts to save him are vividly told. He is left bowed with grief, for he suffers under the double penalty of "a reproachful world and a reproaching conscience."

CHAPTER VII

Maria Edgeworth. Lady Morgan

"MY real name is Thady Quirk, though in the family I have always been known by no other than 'honest Thady'; afterward, in the time of Sir Murtagh, diseased, I remember to hear them calling me 'old Thady,' and now I 'm come to 'poor Thady.'" Thus the faithful servant of the Rackrent family introduces himself, before relating the history of the lords of the castle, where he and his had lived rent-free time out of mind. And what consummate art Maria Edgeworth showed in her first novel, *Castle Rackrent*, in letting "poor Thady" ramble with all the garrulity of old age. To him, who had never been farther than a day's tramp from the castle, there was nothing in the world's history but it and its owners. No servant but an Irish servant could have told the story as he did, judging the characters of his masters with shrewd wit and relating their worst failings with a "God bless them."

And where out of Ireland could Thady have found such masters, ready to spend all they

had and another man's too, happy and free, and dying as merrily as they had lived! There was Sir Patrick, who, as Thady tells us, "could sit out the best man in Ireland, let alone the three kingdoms"; Sir Kit, who married a Jewess for her money; and Sir Condy, who signed away the estate rather than be bothered to look into his steward's accounts, and then feigned that he was dead that he might hear what his friends said of him at the wake. But he soon came to life, and a merry time they had of it. "But to my mind," says Thady, "Sir Condy was rather upon the sad order in the midst of it all, not finding there was such a great talk about himself after his death, as he had expected to hear." But Thady loved his master, and it is with genuine grief that he records his ultimate death, and with simple and unconscious wit he adds, "He had but a very poor funeral after all."

In *The Absentee*, the manners and customs of the Irish peasants are more broadly delineated than in *Castle Rackrent*. *The Absentee* was written to call the attention of the Irish landlords who were living in England to the wretched condition of their tenants left in the power of unscrupulous stewards. Lord Colambre, the son of Lord Clonbrony, an absentee, visits his father's estates, which he has not seen for many years, in disguise, and goes among the peasants, many of whom are in

abject poverty. But the quick generosity of the nation speaks in the poor Widow O'Neil's "Kindly welcome, sir," with which she opens the door to the unknown lord, and its enthusiastic loyalty in the joyful acclamations of the peasants when he reveals himself to them,—a scene which Macaulay has pronounced the finest in literature since the twenty-second book of the *Odyssey*.

Ennui is another of her stories of Irish life, in which the supposed Earl of Glenthorn, after a long residence in England, returns to his Irish estates. The heroine of this tale is the old nurse, Ellinor O'Donoghoe. As the nurses of many stories are said to have done, she had substituted her own child for the rightful heir, and was frantic with joy when she saw him the master of Glenthorn Castle. Her devotion to the earl is pathetic, and her secret fears of the deception she had practised on the old earl may have prompted her strange speech that, if it pleased God, she would like to die on Christmas Day, of all days, "because the gates of heaven will be open all that day; and who knows but a body might slip in unbeknownst?" Ellinor is a woman of many virtues and many failings, but she is always pure Celt.

How well contrasted are the two cousins, friends of Ormond, Sir Ulick O'Shane, a wily politician and a member of Parliament, and Mr.

Cornelius O'Shane, King of the Black Islands, called by his dependents King Corny. The latter, bluff, generous, brave, open as the day, is yet a match for his crafty kinsman. Sir Ulick's visit to King Corny is a masterpiece. He has a purpose in his visit and a secret to guard, which King Corny is watching to discover. Sir Ulick has been bantering his kinsman on the old-fashioned customs observed on his estate and ridicules his method of ploughing:

" 'Your team, I see, is worthy of your tackle,' pursued Sir Ulick. 'A mule, a bull, and two lean horses. I pity the foremost poor devil of a horse, who must starve in the midst of plenty, while the horse, bull, and even mule, in a string behind him, are all plucking and munging away at their hay ropes.'

"Cornelius joined in Sir Ulick's laugh, which shortened its duration.

" 'T is comical ploughing, I grant,' said he, 'but still, to my fancy, anything 's better and more profitable nor the tragi-comic ploughing you practise every sason in Dublin.'

" 'I?' said Sir Ulick.

"'Ay, you and all your courtiers, ploughing the half-acre, continually pacing up and down that castle-yard, while you 're waiting in attendance there. Every one to his own taste, but,

" 'If there 's a man on earth I hate,
Attendance and dependence be his fate.' "

King Corny has been studying his diplomatic kinsman carefully to learn his secret, until the wily politician, by unnecessary caution in guarding it, overreaches himself, when King Corny exclaims to himself:

"Woodcocked! That he has, as I foresaw he would."

While the trained diplomat murmurs as he takes his leave, "All 's safe."

Native wit had got the better of artful cunning.

And when Sir Ulick dies in disgrace, how pithy is the remark of one of the men, as he is filling in the grave:

"There lies the making of an excellent gentleman—but the cunning of his head spoiled the goodness of his heart."

In the same book, how generous and how Irish is Moriarty, lying on the brink of death, as he thinks of Ormond, who had shot him in a fit of passion but bitterly repented his rash deed:

"I 'd live through all, if possible, for his sake, let alone my mudther's, or shister's or my own—'t would be too bad, after all the trouble he got these two nights, to be dying at last, and hanting him, maybe, whether I would or no."

The quick kindness which so often twists an Irishman's tongue is humorously illustrated in the *Essay on Irish Bulls*, which Maria Edgeworth and her father wrote together. Mr.

Phelim O'Mooney, disguised as Sir John Bull, accepts his brother's wager that he cannot remain four days in England without the country of his birth being discovered eight times. Whenever his speech betrays him, it is the result of his emotions. When he sees Bourke, a pugilist of his own country, overcome by an Englishman, he cries to him excitedly: "How are you, my gay fellow? Can you see at all with the eye that is knocked out?" A little later, in discussing a certain impost duty, he grows angry and exclaims: "If I had been the English minister, I would have laid the dog-tax upon cats." The humour of his situation increases to a climax, so that the fun never flags. Such stories as this in which the wit is simply sparkling good-nature, with no attempt to use it as a weapon against frail humanity as did Fielding and Thackeray, or to produce a smile by exaggeration as did Dickens, but simply bubbling fun, as free from guile as the sun's laughter on Killarney, show that Miss Edgeworth was a comedian of the first rank. Like all true comedians, she is also strong in the pathetic, but it is the Irish pathos, in which there is ever a smile amid the tears. This is found in the story of the return of Lady Clonbrony to her own country; the fall of Castle Rackrent; and the ruin by their sudden splendour of the family of Christy O'Donoghoe.

Whenever Miss Edgeworth writes of Ireland and its people, her pages glow with the inspiration of genius. There is no exaggeration, no caricature; all is told with simple truth. It has often been the fate of novelists whose aim has been to depict the manners and customs of a locality to win the ill-will of the obscure people they have brought into prominence. But not so with Maria Edgeworth. Her family, although originally English, had been settled for two hundred years in Ireland. She loved the country and always wrote of it with a loving pen. Before *Castle Rackrent* was written, Ireland had been for many centuries an outcast in literature, known only for her blunders and bulls. But, as one of her characters says, "An Irish bull is always of the head, never of the heart." Even though her characters are humorous, they are never clowns. All the men have dignity, and all the women grace. She gave them a respectable place in literature.

But her influence was felt outside of Ireland. Old Thady, in his garrulous description of the masters of Castle Rackrent, had introduced the first national novel, in which the avowed object is to represent traits of national character. Patriotic writers in other countries learned through her how to serve their own land, and she was one of the many influences which led to the writing of the Waverley

novels. Scott says in the preface of these books:

"Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade the work of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles."

As the reader realises the power of Maria Edgeworth's mind, her ability to describe manners and customs, to read character, and to depict comic and tragic scenes, he wishes that her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, had not so constantly interfered in her work, and insisted that every book she wrote must illustrate some principle of education. He was not singular in this respect. Rousseau, whom he greatly admired at one time, had taught educational methods by a novel. Madame de Genlis, the teacher of Louis Philippe, was writing novels that were celebrated throughout Europe, in which she expounded rules for the training of the young. Maria Edgeworth, with her father at her elbow, never lost sight of the

moral of her tale. Vivian, in the story of that name, was so weak that he was always at the mercy of the artful. Ormond's passions led him into trouble. Beauclerc was almost ruined by his foolish generosity. Lady Delacour, with no object in life but pleasure, cast aside her own happiness that she might outshine the woman she hated. Lady Clonbrony squandered her fortune and health that she might be snubbed by her social superiors. Mrs. Beaumont played a deep diplomatic game in her small circle of friends, and finally overreached herself. Lady Cecilia, the friend of Helen, brought sorrow to her and infamy upon herself by her duplicity. In the analysis of motive, and the growth of Cecilia's wrong-doing from a small beginning, the book resembles the novels of George Eliot. But Maria Edgeworth could not know her own characters as she otherwise would, because the moral was always uppermost. When Mrs. Inchbald criticised her novel *Patronage*, she replied: "Please to recollect, we had our moral to work out." Mr. Edgeworth, in his preface to *Tales of Fashionable Life*, thus sets forth his daughter's purpose:

"It has been my daughter's aim to promote by all her works the progress of education from the cradle to the grave. All the parts of this series of moral fiction bear upon the faults and

excellencies of different ages and classes; and they have all risen from that view of society which we have laid before the public in more didactic works on education."

Such a method of writing tended to kill emotion, yet emotion breaks out at times with genuine force, and always has a true ring. This is especially true in the *Tales of Fashionable Life*. There society women appear cold and heartless in the drawing-room, and so they have generally been represented in fiction. So Thackeray regarded them. But Maria Edgeworth followed them to the boudoir, and there reveals beneath the laces and jewels many beautiful womanly traits. As we see in tale after tale true feeling welling to the surface, and then choked up by the moral, we recognise the pathetic truth that Mr. Edgeworth's educational methods were fatal to genius.

But strong emotion sways only a small part of the lives of most men and women. Were it otherwise, like the great lyric poets, we should all die young. And she has written about the common, everyday, prosaic life with a truthfulness rarely excelled.

One of the most interesting studies in a novel is to observe the author's view of life. With the exception of those of Mademoiselle De Scudéri nearly all the novels of French women considered love as the ruling passion for happi-

ness or woe, and all of the characters were under its sway. Even Mademoiselle De Scudéri in the preface to *Ibrahim* announced it as her distinct purpose that all her heroes were to be ruled by the two most sublime passions, love and ambition; but she was a humorist and unconsciously interested her readers more by her witty descriptions of people than by the loves of Cyrus and Mandane. But this passion has seldom held such an exaggerated place in the stories of English women. Maria Edgeworth in particular noticed that men and women were actuated by many motives or passions. A large income or a title was often capable of inspiring a feeling so akin to love that even the bosom that felt its glow was unable to distinguish the difference. Loss of respect could kill the strongest passion, and some of her heroines have even remained single, or else married men whom at first they had regarded with indifference, rather than marry the object of their first love after he had forfeited their esteem. Sometimes the tameness of her heroines shocked their author. While correcting *Belinda* for Mrs. Barbauld's "Novelists' Library," Miss Edgeworth wrote to a friend:

"I really was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone Belinda, that I could have torn the pages out."

Propinquity, opportunity, almost a mental

suggestion are quite enough to produce a long chain of events affecting a lifetime. "Ask half the men you are acquainted with why they are married, and their answer, if they speak the truth, will be, 'Because I met Miss Such-a-One at such a place, and we were continually together.' 'Propinquity, propinquity,' as my father used to say, and he was married five times, and twice to heiresses." So speaks Mrs. Broadhurst, a match-making mother in *The Absentee*. And this is the reason why most of Miss Edgeworth's heroes and heroines love. But the advances of a designing woman are quite sufficient, as in *Vivian*, to make a fond lover forget his plighted troth to another, and the flattery of an unscrupulous man makes him suspicious of his real friends. Character is destiny, if the character is strong, but circumstances are destiny, if the character is weak. It is the aim of her novels to show how certain traits of character, as indecision, pride, love of luxury, indolence, lead to misfortune, and how these dangerous traits may be overcome.

Notwithstanding her moral, her plots are never hackneyed and never repeated. They are drawn from life and have the variety of life. In the story of *Ennui*, there is the twice-told tale of the nurse's son substituted for the real heir; but when he learns the true story of his

birth, and resigns the castle, the title, and all its wealth to the rightful Earl of Glenthorn, who has been living in the village working at the forge, there is a great change from the usual story. The heir of the ancient family of Glenthorn accepts the earldom for his son, but with reluctance. The manners of the peasant remain with the earl, and the poor man, at last, begs the one who has been educated for the position to accept the title and the estates. In this she emphasised again what she constantly taught, that education and environment are more powerful than heredity.

As she taught that reason should be the guide of life, so she lived. Her fourscore years and three were spent largely at her ancestral home of Edgeworthstown. She assisted her father in making improvements to better the condition of the tenantry, and to promote their happiness. When in Paris, she met a Mr. Edelcrantz, a gentleman in the service of the king of Sweden. Admiration was succeeded by love. But he could not leave the court at Stockholm, and Miss Edgeworth felt that neither duty nor inclination would permit her to leave her quiet life in Ireland. Reason was stronger than love. So they parted like her own heroes and heroines. All that history records of him is that he never married. She resumed her responsibilities at home, and if the thought of this separation sometimes brought the tears to her eyes, as her

stepmother once wrote to a friend, she was as cheerful, gay, and light-hearted in the home circle as she had always been.

Besides her moral tales for adults, which were read throughout Europe, Maria Edgeworth was always interested in the education of boys and girls. The eldest sister in a family of twenty-one children, the offspring of four marriages, she taught her younger brothers and sisters, and thus grew to know intimately the needs of childhood and what stories would appeal to them. As her father wrote, it was her "aim to promote by all her works the progress of education from the cradle to the grave." In her stories for children she inculcated lessons of industry, economy, thoughtfulness, and unselfishness.

If she helped to eradicate from the novel its false, highly colored sentimental pictures of life, still greater was her work in producing literature for young people. Hers were among the first wholesome stories written for children. Before this the chapman had carried about with him in his pack small paper-covered books which warned boys and girls of the dangers of a life of crime. One book was named *An hundred godly lessons which a mother on her death-bed gave to her children*. Another book of religious and moral Sunday reading was

called *The Afflicted Parent, or the Undutiful Child Punished.* This gives the sad history of the two children of a gentleman in Chester, a son and a daughter. The daughter chided her brother for his wickedness, upon which he struck her and killed her. He was hanged for this, but even then his punishment was not completed. He came back to life, told the minister several wicked deeds which he had committed, and was hanged a second time. In most of these tales the gallows loomed dark and threatening.

In contrast to these morbid tales are the wholesome stories of Maria Edgeworth. The boys and girls about whom she writes are drawn from life. If they are bad, their crimes are never enormous, but simply a yielding to the common temptations of childhood. Hal, in *Waste Not, Want Not,* thinks economy beneath a gentleman's notice, and at last loses a prize in an archery contest for lack of a piece of string which he had destroyed. Fisher in *The Barring Out,* a cowardly boy, buys twelve buns for himself with a half-crown which belonged to his friend, and then gives a false account of the money. His punishment is expulsion from the school. Lazy Lawrence has a worse fate. He will not work, plays pitch farthing, is led by bad companions to steal, and is sent to

Bridewell. But he is not left in a hopeless condition. After he had served his term of imprisonment he became remarkable for his industry.

But there are more good boys and girls than bad ones in her stories. The love of children for their parents, and the sacrifices they will make for those they love, are beautifully told. In the story of *The Orphans*, Mary, a girl of twelve, finds a home for her brothers and sisters, after her father and mother die, in the ruins of Rossmore Castle, where they support themselves by their labour. Mary finds that she can make shoes of cloth with soles of platted hemp, and by this industry the children earn enough for all their needs. As directions are given for making these shoes, any little girl reading the story would know how to follow the example of Mary. Jem in the story of *Lazy Lawrence* finds that there are many ways by which he can earn the two guineas without which his horse Lightfoot must be sold. He works early and late, and at last accomplishes his purpose.

Mrs. Ritchie says of this story: "Lightfoot deserves to take his humble place among the immortal winged steeds of mythology along with Pegasus, or with Black Bess, or Balaam's Ass, or any other celebrated steeds."

The story of *Simple Susan* with its pictures

of village life has the charm of an idyl. The children by the hawthorn bush choosing their May Queen; Susan with true heroism refusing this honour, in order that she may care for her sick mother; the incident of the guinea-hen; Rose's love for Susan; the old harper, playing tunes to the children grouped about him—are all simply told. Susan's love for her pet lamb reminds one of Wordsworth's poem of that name.

And yet these children are not unusual. Most boys and girls have days when they are as good as Mary, or Jem, or Susan. Maria Edgeworth is not inculcating virtues which are impossible of attainment.

A hundred years ago, these stories, as they came from the pen of Maria Edgeworth, delighted boys and girls, and for at least fifty years were read by parents and children. Then for a time they were hidden in libraries, but a collection of them has lately been edited by Mr. Charles Welsh under the appropriate title *Tales that never Die*, which have proved as interesting to the children of to-day as to those of bygone generations.

Whether Maria Edgeworth is writing for old or young, there is one marked trait in all her stories, her kind feeling for all humanity. The vices of her villains are recorded in a tone of sorrow. She seldom uses satire; never "makes

fun" of her characters. Her attitude towards them is that of the lady of Edgeworthstown towards her dependents, or rather that of the elder sister towards the younger members of the family. Such broad and loving sympathy is found in Shakespeare and Scott, but seldom among lesser writers.

In Sydney Owenson, better known by her married name of Lady Morgan, Ireland found at this time another warm but less judicious friend. Her life was more interesting than her books. Her father, an Irish actor, introduced his daughter, while yet a child, to his associates, so that she appeared in society at an early age. But Mr. Owenson was improvident; debts accumulated, and Sydney at the age of fourteen began to earn her own living. The position of a governess, which she filled for a time, being unsuited to her gay, independent disposition, she began to write. Like Johnson a half century or more earlier, with a play in manuscript as her most valuable possession, she went alone to London. She did not wait so long as he did for recognition. New books by new authors were eagerly read. She earned money, a social position, fame, and with it some disagreeable notoriety. An independent, witty Irish woman of great charm, fearless in expressing her opinions, who had introduced herself into society

and for whom nobody stood as sponsor, was looked upon by the old-fashioned English aristocracy as an adventuress; and later, when she came forth as the champion of Irish liberties, and upbraided England for tyranny, she was maliciously denounced by the Tory party.

She entered upon life with three purposes, to each of which she adhered: to advocate the interest of Ireland by her writings; to pay her father's debts; and to provide for his old age. All of these purposes she accomplished.

Besides plays and poems, and two or three insignificant stories, she wrote four novels upon Irish subjects: *The Wild Irish Girl*, *O'Donnel*, *Florence Macarthy*, and *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*. In all these books the beauty of Irish scenery is depicted as background; the fashionable life of Dublin is described, as well as the peasant life in remote hamlets; while the natural resources of the land and the native gaiety of the Celtic temperament are feelingly contrasted with the poverty and misery brought about by unjust laws.

She thus feelingly describes the condition of Ireland in the novel *O'Donnel*. Its sincerity must excuse its overwrought style: "Silence and oblivion hung upon her destiny, and in the memory of other nations she seemed to hold no place; but the first bolt which was knocked off her chain roused her from paralysis, and,

as link fell after link, her faculties strengthened, her powers revived; she gradually rose upon the political horizon of Europe, like her own star brightening in the west, and lifting its light above the fogs, vapours, and clouds, which obscured its lustre. The traveller now beheld her from afar, and her shores, once so devoutly pressed by the learned, the pious, and the brave, again exhibited the welcome track of the stranger's foot. The natural beauties of the land were again explored and discovered, and taste and science found the reward of their enterprise and labours in a country long depicted as savage, because it had long been exposed to desolation and neglect."

In this book a party of travellers visits the Giant's Causeway and its scenery is described as an almost unfrequented place.

The new interest in Ireland of which she writes was very largely due to the novels of Maria Edgeworth, and partly to those of Lady Morgan herself.

Her last novel, *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, is of historic value. Its plot was furnished by the stirring events which took place when the Society of United Irishmen were fighting for parliamentary reforms. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the devoted patriot, is easily recognised in the brave Lord Walter Fitzwalter, and the life of Thomas Corbet furnished the thrilling adven-

tures of the hero, Lord Arranmore. When Thomas Moore visited Thomas Corbet at Caen he referred to the account given of his escape from prison in Lady Morgan's novel as remarkably accurate in its details.

The style of Miss Owenson's earlier books was execrable and fully justified the severe criticism in the first number of the *Quarterly Review*. It gives this quotation from *Ida, or the Woman of Athens*: "Like Aurora, the extremities of her delicate limbs were rosed with flowing hues, and her little foot, as it pressed its naked beauty on a scarlet cushion, resembled that of a youthful Thetis from its blushing tints, or that of a fugitive Atalanta from its height." The wonder is that any serious magazine should have wasted two pages of space upon such nonsense. In ridiculing the book and the author, it gives her some serious advice, with the encouragement that if she follow it, she may become, not a writer of novels, but the happy mistress of a family.

Whether Lady Morgan took this ill-meant advice or not, her style improved with each book, until in *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* it became simple and clear, with only an occasional tendency to high colouring and bombast.

Maria Edgeworth has described the customs and manners of Ireland, and unfolded the character of its people in a manner that has

never been equalled. But Lady Morgan, far inferior as an artist, has given fuller and more picturesque descriptions of the landscape of the country, and has made a valuable addition to the books bearing on the history of Ireland.

CHAPTER VIII

Elizabeth Hamilton. Anna Porter. Jane Porter

ELIZABETH HAMILTON was also an Irish writer, but through her one novel she will always be associated with Scotland. In *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* she did for the Scotch people what Maria Edgeworth had done for the Irish, and represented for the first time in fiction the life of the common people. It is a story of poor people of the serving class. Mrs. Mason, who had been an upper servant in the family of a lord, has been pensioned and takes up her abode with a cousin in the village of Glenburnie. She was among the earliest of our settlement workers. This little village with the pretty name, situated in a beautiful country, had accumulated about its homes as much filth as the tenements of the poorest ward of a large city, and for the same reason, that its inhabitants did not understand the value of cleanliness. Its thatched cottages, had it not been for their chimneys and the smoke issuing from them,

would have passed for stables or hog-sties, for there was a dunghill in front of every door.

Mrs. MacClarty's cottage, where Mrs. Mason was to live, was like all the rest. It was as dirty inside as out. Mrs. MacClarty picked up a cloth from the floor beside her husband's boots, with which to wipe her dishes, and made her cheese in a kettle which had not been washed since the chickens had eaten their last meal from it, although the remains of their feast still adhered to the sides. When Mrs. MacClarty put her black hands into the cheese to stir it, Mrs. Mason reminded her gently that she had not washed them:

" 'Hoot,' returned the gudewife, 'my hands do weel eneugh. I canna be fash'd to clean them at ilka turn.' "

When Mrs. Mason proposed that the windows should be hung on hinges and supplied with iron hooks, so that they could be opened at pleasure, Mr. MacClarty objected to the plan:

" 'And wha do you think wad put in the cleek?' returned he. 'Is there ane, think ye, aboot this hoose, that would be at sic a fash?'

"'Ilka place has just its ain gait,' said the gudewife, 'and ye needna think that ever we 'll learn yours. And, indeed, to be plain wi' you, cusine, I think you hae owre mony fykes. There, didna ye keep Grizzy for mair than twa hours, yesterday morning, soopin' and dustin'

your room in every corner, an' cleanin' out the twa bits of buird, that are for naething but to set your foot on after a'?' "

It may be well to explain that the chickens had been roosting in this chamber before Mrs. Mason's arrival.

The story of Mr. MacClarty's death is pathetic. He is lying ill with a fever in the press-bed in the kitchen, where not a breath of air reaches him. The neighbours have crowded in to offer sympathy. The doors are tightly closed, and his wife has piled blankets over him and given him whiskey and hot water to drink. When Mrs. Mason, who knows that with proper care his life can be saved, urges that he be removed to her room where he can have air, all the neighbours violently oppose her advice. But Peter MacGlashon, the oracle of the village, looks at it more philosophically:

" 'If it 's the wull o' God that he 's to dee, it 's a' ane whar ye tak him; ye canna hinder the wull o' God.'"

But upon Mrs. Mason's insisting that we should do our best to save the life of the sick with the reason God has given us, Peter becomes alarmed:

"'That 's no soond doctrine,' exclaimed Peter. 'It 's the law of works.'"

Elizabeth Hamilton had been a teacher and had written books on education, so that her

description of the school which Mrs. Mason opened in the village gives an accurate idea of the Scottish schools for the poorer classes. Each class was divided into landlord, tenants, and under-tenants, one order being responsible for a specific amount of reading and writing to the order above it. The landlord was responsible to the master both for his own diligence and the diligence of his vassals. If the tenants disobeyed the laws they were tried by a jury of their mates. The results of the training at Mrs. Mason's school might well be an aim of teachers to-day: "To have been educated at the school of Glenburnie implied a security for truth, diligence and honesty."

The pupils in the school gradually learned to love cleanliness and order. The little flower-garden in front gave pleasure to all. The villagers declared, "The flowers are a hantel bonnier than the midden and smell a hantel sweeter, too." With this improvement in taste, the "gude auld gaits" gave way to a better order of things.

The Cottagers of Glenburnie is more realistic in detail than anything which had yet been written. It is a short simple story told in simple language. There is a slight plot, but it is the village upon which our attention is fastened. One individual stands out more strongly than the rest: that is Mrs. MacClarty with her con-

stant expression, "It is well eneugh. I canna be fashed."

This little book was read in every Scotch village, and many of the poor people saw in it a picture of their own homes. But its sound common-sense appealed to them. It was reasonable that butter without hairs would sell for more than with them, and that gardens without weeds would produce more vegetables than when so encumbered. The book did for the cottagers of Scotland what Mrs. Mason had done for those of Glenburnie.

The lives of Anna Maria and Jane Porter resemble in a few particulars that of Elizabeth Hamilton. Like her they belonged, at least on the father's side, to Ireland, and like her they lived in Scotland, and their names will always be associated with that country. But Elizabeth Hamilton wrote the first novel of Scotland's poor, the ancestor of *The Window in Thrums* and *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush;* Jane Porter wrote the first novel of Scotland's kings, the immediate forerunner of *Waverley*, *The Abbot*, and *The Monastery*.

Upon the death of Major Porter, who had been stationed for some years with his regiment at Durham, Mrs. Porter removed to Edinburgh, where her children were educated. Their quick lively imaginations found food for growth on

Scottish soil. At that time Caledonia was a land of cliff and crag, inhabited by a quarrelsome people, whom the English still regarded with something the same aversion which Dr. Johnson had so often expressed to Boswell. But every castle had its story of brave knights and fair ladies, and every brae had been the scene of renowned deeds of arms. In every cottage the memory of the past was kept alive, and fathers and mothers related to their children stories of Wallace and of Bruce, until the romantic past became more real than the living present. Mrs. Porter's servants delighted to relate to her eager children stories of Scotland's glory. The maids would sing to them the songs of "Wallace wight," and the serving-man would tell them tales of Bannockburn and Cambus-Kenneth.

Rarely have stories fallen on such fertile soil. In a short time, three of these children became famous. Sir Robert Ker Porter, the brother of Anna and Jane, followed closely in the footsteps of Scotland's heroes, and became distinguished as a soldier and diplomat, as well as a famous painter of battles. He painted the enormous canvas of *The Storming of Seringapatam*, a sensational panorama, one hundred and twenty feet in length, the first of its kind, but in a style that has often been followed in recent years. The idol of his family, it would

seem that he was endowed with many of those qualities which his sisters gave to the heroes of their romances.

Anna Maria Porter, the youngest of the group, was the first to appear in print. At the age of fifteen, she published a little volume called *Artless Tales*. From this time until her death, at least every two years a new book from her pen was announced. She wrote a large number of historical romances, which were widely read and translated into many languages. This kind of story, in the hands of Sophia Lee, was tame and uninteresting. Anna Porter increased its scope and its popularity. Her plots are well worked out with many thrilling adventures. Her imagination, however, had been quickened by reading, not by observation, and although her scenes cover many countries of Europe and many periods of history, they differ but little in pictorial detail, and her characters are lifeless. Her style of writing is, moreover, so inflated that it gives an air of unreality to her books.

She thus describes the Hungarian brothers: "They were, indeed, perfect specimens of the loveliness of youth and the magnificence of manhood." This novel, dealing with the French Revolution, was one of the most popular of all her stories. It went through several editions both in England and on the continent. Super-

lative expressions seem to have been fashionable in that age which was still encumbered by much that was artificial in dress and manners. Miss Porter with proper formality thus writes of her heroine as she was recovering from a fainting fit: "With a blissful shiver, Ippolita slowly unclosed her eyes, and turning them round, with such a look as we may imagine blessed angels cast, when awakening amid the raptures of another world, she met those of her sweet and gracious uncle."

Some of her society novels are witty and have a lively style, which suggests the truth of Mr. S. C. Hall's description of the sisters. Anna, a blonde, handsome and gay, he named L'Allegro, in contrast to Jane, a brunette, equally handsome, but with the dignified manners of the heroines of her own romances, whom he styled Il Penseroso.

Jane Porter took a more serious view of the responsibilities of authorship than her sister. Her first novel, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, was written while England was agitated against France and excited over the wrongs of Poland. It grew out of popular feeling. Miss Porter had become acquainted with friends of Kosciusko, men who had taken part with him in his country's struggle for liberty, and made him the hero of the story. The scenery of Poland was

so well described that the Poles refused to believe that she had not visited their country; and events were related in a manner so pleasing to them that they distinguished the author by many honours. It is one thing to write an historical novel of people and events that have long been buried in oblivion; but to write a story of times so near the present that its chief actors are still living, is, indeed, a rash task. And for any history to meet with the approval of its hero and his friends bespeaks rare excellence in the work.

In the light of the classic standing of the historical novel, due to the genius of Scott and Dumas, it is interesting to read how *Thaddeus of Warsaw* came to be published. Miss Porter wrote the romance merely for her own amusement, with no thought of its being read outside the circle of her family and intimate friends. They urged her to publish it. But for a long time she resisted their importunities on the ground that it did not belong to any known style of writing: stories of real life, like *Tom Jones*, or improbable romances, like *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, were the only legitimate forms of fiction. *Thaddeus of Warsaw* had the exact details of history with a romance added to please the author's fancy. Thus did Jane Porter discover to the world the possibilities of the historical novel.

Her next novel, *The Scottish Chiefs*, grew out of the stories she had heard in her childhood. Besides the tales of Scotland's struggle for independence which she heard from the servants in her own home, a venerable old woman called Luckie Forbes, who lived not far from Mrs. Porter's house, used to tell her of the wonderful deeds of William Wallace. Of the influence these stories had upon her childish mind, Jane Porter has thus written:

"I must avow, that to Luckie Forbes's familiar, and even endearing, manner of narrating the lives of William Wallace and his dauntless followers; her representation of their heart-sacrifices for the good of their country, filling me with an admiration and a reverential amazement, like her own; and calling forth my tears and sobs, when she told of the deaths of some, and of the cruel execution of the virtuous leader of them all;—to her I must date my early and continued enthusiasm in the character of Sir William Wallace! and in the friends his truly hero-soul delighted to honour."

Before writing *The Scottish Chiefs*, Miss Porter read everything she could find bearing upon the history of England and Scotland during the reigns of the first two Edwards. She personally visited the places she described. She wrote in the preface: "I assure the reader that I seldom lead him to any spot in Scotland

whither some written or oral testimony respecting my hero had not previously conducted myself." Besides these sources of information, Miss Porter was familiar with the poem of *Wallace* by Blind Harry the Minstrel, the biographer of Scotland's national hero. Blind Harry lived nearly two centuries after the death of Wallace, but he had access to books now lost, and collected stories about Scotland's struggle for independence while it was still prominent in the public mind. Although he tells many exalted stories of the numbers whom Wallace overcame by his single arm, the poem is on the whole authentic. Sheriff Mackay in the *Dictionary of National Biography* writes that the life of Wallace by Blind Harry "became the secular bible of his countrymen, and echoes through their later history." Miss Porter introduced love scenes to vary the deeds of war, but there is nothing else in *The Scottish Chiefs* which is not true to history, or to that more legitimate source of romance, the traditions common among the people.

From the opening chapter, in which Wallace is described as an outlaw because he had refused to take the oath of allegiance to an English king, to his death in London and the final crowning of Bruce, there is not a dull page. Especially interesting is the scene between William Wallace and the Earl of Carrick, after

the battle of Falkirk, and the appearance of Robert Bruce, who overheard this conversation, fighting by the side of Wallace. The truth of this incident has been denied, but it is related by Blind Harry. The trial of William Wallace in the great hall at Westminster for treason, and his defence that he had never acknowledged the English government, is most impressive, and is a matter of record.

The Scottish Chiefs is the first historical novel in which the author made diligent research in order to give a truthful representation of the times. It has the atmosphere of feudal days. Notwithstanding the ridicule cast upon Wallace as a lady's hero, he is drawn in heroic proportions. Miss Mitford declared that she scarcely knew "one *herós de roman* whom it is possible to admire, except Wallace in Miss Porter's story." The work is written in the style of the old epics. The many puerile attempts of the last few years to write an historical romance in which Washington or Lincoln should figure have shown how difficult is the task. How weak and commonplace have these great men appeared in fiction! It requires a nature akin to the heroic to draw it. In 1810, when it was published, *The Scottish Chiefs* was the only great historical romance. Four years later *Waverley* was published, the first of the novels of Sir Walter Scott. This was superior in

imagination and in craftsmanship to Miss Porter's novel, but not in interest. *The Scottish Chiefs* has since been excelled by many others of the Waverley novels, though not by all, by *Henry Esmond*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, but it preceded all these in time, and still holds a place as a classic of the second rank.

Critics of to-day smile at its enthusiastic style, but Miss Porter speaks with no more enthusiasm than did the poor folk from whom she heard the story. As long as enthusiastic youth loves an unblemished hero, *The Scottish Chiefs* will be read. It is impossible to analyse these early impressions or to test their truth. One can only remember them with gratitude. Jane Porter has, however, taught the youth of other lands to reverence Scotland's popular hero, so that the mention of his name awakens a thrill of pleasure, and the hills and glades associated with his deeds glow with the light of romance.

In 1815, Jane Porter wrote a third historical novel, *The Pastor's Fireside*. This is far inferior to *The Scottish Chiefs*. It has the same elevated style, and the mystery which surrounds the hero awakens and holds the attention. But the novel deals with the later Stuarts, and one feels that the author herself was but little interested in the historical events about which she was writing. The book has no abiding qualities.

In 1832 was published a book bearing the title *Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative of His Shipwreck and Consequent Discovery of certain Islands in the Caribbean Sea, with a Detail of many extraordinary and highly interesting Events in his Life from the year 1733 to 1749 as written in his Own Diary. Edited by Jane Porter.* In the preface Miss Porter explains how the manuscript was given to her by the relatives of Sir Edward. The story reads like a second Robinson Crusoe. It has all the minute details that give an air of verisimilitude to the writings of Defoe. In the opening chapter, Edward Seaward supposedly gives this account of himself:

"Born of loyal and honest parents, whose means were just sufficient to give a common education to their children, I have neither to boast of pedigree nor of learning; yet they bequeathed to me a better inheritance—a stout constitution, a peaceable disposition, and a proper sense of what is due to my superiors and equals; for such an inheritance I am grateful to God, and to them."

In the story he is married to a woman of his own rank, and she embarks with him for Jamaica, but they are shipwrecked on an island near Lat. 14 deg. 30 min. N. and Long. 81 deg. W. They find bags of money hidden on the island, some negroes come to them, and a

schooner is driven to their haven. Edward sees in this a purpose which afterward is fulfilled. He says to his wife: "I should be the most ungrateful of men, to the good God who has bestowed all this on me, if I did not feel that this money, so wonderfully delivered into my hands, was for some special purpose of stewardship. The providential arrival of the poor castaway negroes, and then of the schooner,—all—all working together to give us the means of providing every comfort, towards planting a colony of refuge in that blessed haven of our own preservation,—seem to me, in solemn truth, as so many signs from the Divine Will, that it is our duty to fulfil a task allotted to us, in that long unknown island."

This island becomes inhabited by a happy people, and Seaward is knighted by George the Second.

Everybody read the book. A second edition was called for within the year. Old naval officers got out their charts, and hunted up the probable locality of the places mentioned. Nobody at first doubted its veracity. The *Quarterly*, however, decided that no such man had ever existed and that the whole story was a fiction. It hunted for a schooner mentioned and the names of the naval officers. The latter had never served in his Majesty's navy and the former had not timed her voyages according to

the story. The uniform of a naval officer described in the narrative was not worn until thirteen years after these adventures had taken place, and no man by the name of Seaward had been knighted during this time, nor was there any village in England having the name of the village which he gave as his birthplace. Supposing the editor had changed names and dates, the *Quarterly* criticism becomes valueless. Although the magazine declared it a work of fiction, it gave both the story and the style high praise, and declared it far superior to her romances. When Miss Porter was asked about it, she declined to answer, but said that Scott had his great secret and she might be permitted to have her little one.

It is generally considered now to have been the work of Jane Porter. No two books differ more in style than *The Scottish Chiefs* and *Sir Edward Seaward*. But twenty-two years had elapsed between them. The former is written in dignified, stately language; the latter in simple homely words, and both its invention and its style entitle it to a place among English classics.

CHAPTER IX

Amelia Opie. Mary Brunton

EVERY novel that touches upon the life of its generation naturally in course of time becomes historical. These novels should be preserved, not necessarily for their literary excellence, but because they bear the imprint of an age. Such are the novels of Amelia Opie and Mary Brunton.

Mrs. Opie, then Miss Alderson, left her quiet home in Norwich to visit London at the height of the furor occasioned by the French Revolution. The literary circles in which she was received were discussing excitedly the rights of men and women, and the beauties of life lived according to the dictates of nature. Among these enthusiasts, Miss Alderson met Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and esteemed her highly. Her own imagination did not, however, yield to the intoxication of a life of perfect freedom, a dream which wrecked the life of Mary Wollstonecraft.

There is no sadder biography than that of Mary Wollstonecraft. In Paris, she met Gilbert Imlay, an American, with whom she fell in love. When he wished to marry her, she refused to permit him to make her his wife, because she had family debts to pay, and she was unwilling to have him legally responsible for them. But she had read the books of Rousseau, and had been deeply impressed with the thought that marriage is a bondage, not needed by true love. She took the name of Imlay, and passed for his wife, but the marriage was not sanctioned either by the church or by law. After the birth of a daughter, Imlay deserted her. At first she tried to commit suicide, and there is the sad picture of this talented woman walking about in the drenching rain, and then throwing herself from the bridge at Putney. She was rescued, and a little over a year later became the wife of William Godwin.

The life-story of Mary Wollstonecraft suggested to Amelia Opie the novel of *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter*, which was not written until after the death of the original.

It is a tender pathetic story. Mrs. Mowbray, the mother of Adeline, believed by her neighbours to be a genius, is interested in new theories of education, and, while writing a book on that subject, occasionally experiments with Adeline,

although she neglects her for the most part. In spite of this Adeline grows up beautiful and pure, totally ignorant of the world and its wickedness. Her mother often quoted in her presence the book of a Mr. Glenmurray, in which he proves marriage to be a tyranny and a profanation of the sacred ties of love. Adeline is captivated by the enthusiastic ideals of the young author. There is a fine contrast in character and motive, where Adeline is entertaining Mr. Glenmurray, the high-minded writer, and Sir Patrick O'Carrol, a man of many gallantries. Sir Patrick is shocked to meet at her home the man whose theories have banished him from respectable society. Adeline, innocent of any low interpretation that may be put upon her words, makes the frank avowal that, in her opinion, marriage is a shameless tie, and that love and honour are all that should bind men and women. Sir Patrick heartily agrees with her sentiments, and as a consequence accosts her with a freedom repugnant to her, although she hardly understands its import, while Glenmurray sits by gloomily, resolving to warn her in private that the opinions she had expressed were better confined in the present dark state of the public mind to a select and discriminating circle. After they leave Adeline, Glenmurray, as the outcome of this meeting, had the satisfaction of fighting a duel

with Sir Patrick, contrary to the tenets of his own book.

But when, to escape the advances of Sir Patrick, Adeline places herself under the protection of Glenmurray, who ardently loves her, he urges her to marry him. This she refuses to do, and encourages him to show the world the truth and beauty of his teachings. Glenmurray, a man of sensitive nature, suffers more than Adeline from the indignities she constantly receives when she frankly says she is Mr. Glenmurray's companion, not his wife. He takes her from place to place to avoid them, for he realises that the world censures her, while it excuses him. But Adeline is so happy in her love for him, and in her faith in his teachings, that she endures every humiliation with the faith of the early Christian martyrs. When he urges her, as he so often does, to marry him, he reads in her eyes only grief that he will not gladly suffer for what he believes to be right, and desists rather than pain her. But his death is hastened by the harassing thought that her whole future is blighted by his teachings. As he says to her just before his death:

"Had not I, with the heedless vanity of youth, given to the world the crude conceptions of four-and-twenty, you might at this moment have been the idol of a respectable society; and I, equally respected, have been the husband

of your heart; while happiness would perhaps have kept that fatal disease at bay, of which anxiety has facilitated the approach."

It is a beautiful love story, but the hero and heroine were of too fine a fibre to stand alone against the world. After the death of Glenmurray, the interest flags. The conclusion is weak, not at all worthy of the beginning. Love of every variety has been the theme of poets and novelists, but there is no love story more beautiful for its self-sacrificing devotion to principle and to each other, than the few pages of this novel which tell of the unsanctioned married life of the high-minded idealist and his bride.

Mrs. Opie wrote *Simple Tales* and *Tales of Real Life*. They are for the most part pathetic stories in which unhappiness in the family circle is caused either by undue sternness of a parent, the unfilial conduct of a son or daughter, or a misunderstanding between husband and wife. The feelings of the characters are often minutely described. A firm faith in the underlying goodness of human nature is shown throughout all these tales, and all teach love and forbearance.

Mary Brunton like Mrs. Opie wrote to improve the ethical ideals of her generation. In the books of that day the theory was often advanced

that young men must sow their wild oats, and that men were more pleasing to the ladies for a few vices. Her first novel, *Self-Control*, was written to contradict this doctrine. In a letter to Joanna Baillie, Mrs. Brunton wrote:

"I merely intended to show the power of the religious principle in bestowing self-command, and to bear testimony against a maxim as immoral as indelicate, that a reformed rake makes the best husband."

Laura, the heroine of *Self-Control*, ardently loved a man of rank and fashion. When she learned of his amours, her love turned first to grief, then to disgust. Stung by her abhorrence, he attempted to seduce her to conquer her pride. The purity of the heroine triumphs. She meets a man whom she esteems and afterwards marries. Many of Laura's adventures border on the improbable, but her emotions are truthfully depicted.

This was a bolder novel than appears on the surface. Long before this the wicked heroine had been banished from fiction. The leading lady must be virtuous to keep the love of the hero. Richardson laid down that law of the novel. Mary Brunton asserted the same rule for the hero, and maintained that a gentleman, handsome, noble, accomplished, could not retain the love of a pure woman, if he were not virtuous.

The book gave rise to heated discussions. Two gentlemen had a violent dispute over it: one said it ought to be burnt by the common hangman; the other, that it ought to be written in letters of gold. Beyond its ethical import, the novel has no literary value.

The kind reception given to *Self-Control* led the author to begin her second novel, *Discipline*. This was intended to show how the mind must be trained by suffering before it can hope for true enjoyment when self-control is lacking. Mary Brunton had read Miss Edgeworth's description of the Irish people with pleasure; so she planned to set forth in this novel the manners of the Scottish Highlands and of the Orkneys, where she herself had been born. But before it was finished, *Waverley* was published. There the Scottish Highlands stood forth on a large canvas, distinct and truthful, and Mrs. Brunton realised at once how weak her own attempts were compared with Scott's masterly work. Her interest in her book flagged, although it was published in December of that year. Some of the Highland scenes are interesting because accurately described, and her account of a mad-house in Edinburgh is said to be an exact representation of an asylum for the insane in that city.

Mrs. Brunton died before her third novel, *Emmeline*, was finished. Her husband, the

Reverend Alexander Brunton, professor of Oriental Languages at Edinburgh University, published the fragment of it with her memoirs after her death. The aim of this novel was to show how little chance of happiness there is when a divorced woman marries her seducer. It only shows the inability of Emmeline to live down her past shame and the unhappiness which follows the married pair.

In the novels of Mrs. Opie and Mary Brunton the standard of conduct is the same as to-day. Both men and women are expected to lead upright lives, with true regard for the happiness of those about them. In *Self-Control* the hero refuses to fight a duel with the villain who has injured him, and forgives him with a true Christian spirit. To be sure, there are still seductions, and the world of fashion is without a heart. But conduct which the former generation would have regarded with a smile is here denominated SIN, and that which they named Prudery shines forth as VIRTUE. The problems of life which these novels discuss are the same, as we have said, which agitate the world to-day.

CHAPTER X

Jane Austen

IF in this age of steam and electricity you would escape from the noise of the city, and experience for an hour the quiet joys of the English countryside, at a time when a chaise and four was the quickest means of reaching the metropolis from any part of the kingdom, turn to the pages of Jane Austen. In them have been preserved faithful pictures of the peaceful life of the south of England exactly as it existed a hundred and more years ago. The gently sloping downs crossed by hedgerows, the lazy rivers meandering through the valleys, the little villages half hidden in the orchards of apple, pear, peach, and plum, all suggest the land of happy homes. On the outskirts of every village there are the two of three gentlemen's houses: the substantial mansion of the squire, with its park of old elms, oaks, and beeches; a smaller house suitable for a gentleman of slender income, like Mr. Bennet, the father of the four girls of *Pride and Prejudice*, or for an elder son who will in time take possession of the hall, like Charles

Musgrove in the story of *Persuasion;* and the still smaller parsonage standing in the garden of vegetables and flowers, surrounded by a laurel hedge, where lives a younger son or a friend of the family.

The gentry that inhabit these homes carry on the plot of Jane Austen's novels. And what an even, almost uneventful life they lead. Life with them is one long holiday. Dance follows dance, varied only by a dinner at the mansion, a picnic party, private theatricals, a brief sojourn at Bath, a briefer one in London, or a ride to Lyme, seventeen miles away. But Cupid ever hovers near, and in each one of these groups of gentle folk we watch the course of true love, "which never did run smooth." For in spite of match-making mammas and stern fathers with an eye that the marriage settlements shall be sufficient to clothe sentiment with true British respectability, the six novels of Jane Austen contain as many true and tender love stories, differing from one another not so much in the incidents as in the characters of the lovers. Unlike the older novelists, who constantly drew the attention away from the main theme by stories of thrilling adventure, Jane Austen holds closely to the great problem of fiction, whether or not the youths and maidens will be happily married at the conclusion of the book.

When Darcy first meets Elizabeth, the heroine

of *Pride and Prejudice*, he shuns her and her family as vulgar. Elizabeth is so prejudiced against him that she cannot forget his insulting arrogance. But Darcy's love cannot be stemmed. Other heroes have plunged into raging floods to rescue the fair heroine. Darcy does more. For love of Elizabeth he accepts the whole Bennet family, including Mrs. Bennet, who always says the silly thing, and Lydia, who had almost invited Wickham to elope with her and was indifferent as to whether or not he married her, until Darcy compelled him to do so —a bitter humiliation for a man whose greatest fault was overweening pride of birth. At last, Elizabeth comprehends the extent of his generosity, his superior understanding and strength of character, and Darcy is rewarded by the hand of the sunniest heroine in all fiction. Who but Elizabeth with her independent spirit, quick intelligence and lively wit could curb his family pride! They marry, and we know they will be happy.

Sense and Sensibility works out a problem for lovers. Like many romantic girls, Marianne asserts that a woman can love but once. "He never loved that loved not at first sight" is also part of her creed. But after her infatuation for Willoughby has been cured, she contentedly marries Colonel Brandon, although she knows that he frequently has rheumatism and wears

flannel waistcoats. Marianne will be much happier as the wife of a man of mature years who loves her impulsive nature and can control it than she would have been with the gallant who won her first love.

In the piquant satire of *Northanger Abbey* there is another problem suggested. This book is distinctly modern. Man is the pursued; woman the pursuer. Bernard Shaw has treated this momentous question in a serious manner in many of his plays. Jane Austen regards it with a humorous smile. Did Henry Tilney ever know why he married Catherine Morland? Or was this daughter of a country parsonage, without beauty, without accomplishments, and without riches, aware that on her first visit to Bath she used feminine arts that would have put Becky Sharp to shame—who, by the way, was a little girl at that time—and would have made Anne, the knowing heroine of *Man and Superman*, green with envy? Yet her arts consisted simply in following the dictates of her heart. She fell in love with Henry Tilney; looked for him whenever she entered the pump-room; was unhappy if he were absent and expressed her joy at his approach; saw in him the paragon of wisdom and looked at every thing with his eyes. From first ignoring her, he began to seek her society, and learn the true excellence of her character. And then Jane Austen explains:

"I must confess that this affection originated in nothing better than gratitude; or in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought. It is a new circumstance in romance, I acknowledge, and dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity, but if it is as new in common life, the credit of a wild imagination will be all my own."

But lest we think that Miss Austen is asserting a rule that women take the initiative in this matter of love and marriage, it is well to remember that Darcy first loved Elizabeth Bennet, and forced her to acknowledge his worth, and that Colonel Brandon married a young lady who had formerly supposed him at the advanced age of thirty-five to be occupied with thoughts of death rather than of love.

And Mr. Knightley is another hero who fell in love and waited patiently for its return. Emma is like Marianne in one respect, she needed guidance. Almost from childhood the mistress of her father's house and the first lady in the society of Highbury, she was threatened by two evils, "the power of having too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself." Mr. Knightley, the elder brother of her elder sister's husband, is the only person that sees that she is not always wise and that she is sometimes selfish. He

is the only one that chides her. Emma is interested in promoting the welfare of all about her, but she lacks that most feminine quality of insight, so that her well-meant help, as in the case of her protégée, poor Harriet Smith, is sometimes productive of evil. And yet Emma is brave and self-forgetful. Not until she has schooled herself to think of Mr. Knightley as married to Harriet, is she aware how much he is a part of her own life. But this is only another instance of her blindness. When she learns that he has loved her with all her faults ever since she was thirteen, she is very happy. There is no tumultuous passion in this union, but we are assured of a love that will abide through the years.

In *Mansfield Park* and in *Persuasion*, there is another variety of the old story. Fanny Price and Anne Elliot, the one the daughter of a poor lieutenant of marines, whose family is the most ill-bred in all Miss Austen's books, the other the neglected daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, Baronet, have more in common than any other of her heroines. Although these stories are different, yet in each it is the devotion of the heroine that guides the course of love through many obstacles into a quiet haven. Who that reads their story will say that Miss Austen's maidens are without passion? They do not analyse their feelings, nor do they pour them

forth in wild soliloquy. But the heart of each is clearly revealed through little acts and expressions. Fanny Price, cherishing a love for Edmund Bertram, who was kind to her when she was neglected by everybody else, refuses to marry the rich, handsome, and brilliant Mr. Crawford, although she herself is penniless. We feel her misery as she realises that she is nothing but a friend to Edmund and rejoice with her when her love awakens a response. Anne Elliot, the gentlest of all her heroines, who in obedience to her father has broken her engagement to Captain Wentworth eight years before, when she is again thrown into his company, observes his every expression, and grows sad and weak in health at his studied neglect. Other heroines have said more, but none have felt more than Miss Austen's. Anne Elliot herself has spoken for them:

"All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one) is that of loving longest, when existence, or when hope, is gone."

But Jane Austen, like Shakespeare, is a dramatist. So, lest this be taken for Miss Austen's opinion, Captain Wentworth has the last word here when he writes to Anne, "Dare not say that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death. Unjust I have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant."

And so, at the close of these novels, two more happy homes are added to those of rural England.

Are there many heroes and heroines for whom we dare predict a happy married life? Would Mr. B. and Pamela have written such long letters to each other about the training of their children if conversation had not been a bore? Evelina must have been disappointed to discover that Lord Orville lived on roast beef, plum-pudding, and port wine instead of music and poetry. Of all Scott's heroes and heroines none had sacrificed more for each other than Ivanhoe and Rowena; he gave up Rotherwood, and, as a disinherited son, sought forgetfulness of her charms in distant Palestine; she put aside all hopes of becoming a Saxon queen, and was true to the gallant son of Cedric. Yet we have Thackeray for authority that they were not only unhappy, but often quarrelled after Scott left them at the altar. And none of Thackeray's marriages turned out well, although Becky Sharp made Rodney Crawley very happy until he discovered her wiles. Dickens was perhaps more fortunate, but David was led away by the cunning ways of Dora before he discovered a companion and helpmate in Agnes, a heroine worthy to be placed beside Elizabeth and Jane Bennet. George Eliot's books and those of later novelists are rather a warning than an incentive to matrimony. Have all

our sighs and tears over the mishaps of ill-starred lovers been in vain, and is it true that when the curtain falls at the wedding it is only to shut from view a scene of domestic infelicity?

Not so with Jane Austen. She is the queen of match-makers. The marriages brought about by her guidance give a belief in the permanency of English home life, quite as necessary for the welfare of the kingdom as the stability of Magna Charta. Her heroes have qualities that wear well, and her heroines might have inspired Wordsworth's lines:

> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food,
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.

Besides the lovers, many diverting people lived in these homes of the gentry, quite as amusing as any of the peasants who were brought upon the stage by the older dramatists for our entertainment; perhaps more amusing, because of their self-sufficiency. These people seldom do anything that is peculiar, nor are they the objects of practical jokes, as were so many men and women in the earlier books; but they talk freely both at home and abroad about whatever is of interest to them. They seldom use stereotyped words or phrases, yet their conversation is a crystal from which the whole mental horizon of the speaker shines forth.

When Mrs. Bennet learns that Netherfield Park has been let to a single gentleman of fortune, her first exclamation comes from the heart—"What a fine thing for our girls!" After Mr. Collins, upon whom Mr. Bennet's estate is entailed, has resolved to make all possible amends to his daughters by marrying one of them, and is making his famous proposal to Elizabeth, he says with solemn composure: "But, before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it would be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying—and, moreover, for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did." No wonder Elizabeth laughed at such a lover. Mr. Collins is the same type of man as Mr. Smith, whom Evelina meets at Snow Hill, but infinitely more ridiculous because he is an educated man of some attainments.

Then there is Mr. Woodhouse, the father of Emma, with his constant solicitude for everybody's health and his fears that they may have indigestion. When his daughter and her family arrive from London, all well and hearty, he says by way of hospitality: "You and I will have a nice basin of gruel together. My dear Emma, suppose we all have a basin of gruel." His friend Mrs. Bates is always voluble. She is describing Mr. Dixon's country seat in Ireland to Emma: "Jane has heard a great deal of its

beauty—from Mr. Dixon, I mean—I do not know that she ever heard about it from anybody else—but it was very natural, you know, that he should like to speak of his own place while he was paying his addresses—and as Jane used to be very often walking out with them—for Colonel and Mrs. Campbell were very particular about their daughter's not walking out often with only Mr. Dixon, for which I do not at all blame them; of course she heard everything he might be telling Miss Campbell about his own home in Ireland." One respects the mental power of a woman who could remember the main thread of her discourse amid so many digressions.

How characteristic is Sir Walter Elliot's reply to the gentleman who is trying to bring a neighbour's name to his mind. "Wentworth? Oh, ay! Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term *Gentleman*. I thought you were speaking of some man of property." And not the least amusing of these people is Mr. Elton's bride, a pert sort of woman who for some reason patronises everybody into whose company she is thrown. After meeting Mr. Knightley, by far the most consequential person about Highbury, she expresses her approval of him to Emma: "Knightley is quite the gentleman! I like him very much! Decidedly, I think, a very gentlemanlike man."

And Emma wonders if Mr. Knightley has been able to pronounce this self-important newcomer as quite the lady. Pick out almost any speech at random, and anyone who is at all familiar with Miss Austen will easily recognise the speaker.

This ability to describe people by such delicate touches has been highly praised by Macaulay in the essay on Madame D'Arblay before quoted. He thus compares Jane Austen with Shakespeare:

"Admirable as he [Shakespeare] was in all parts of his art, we must admire him for this, that, while he has left us a greater number of striking portraits than all other dramatists put together, he has scarcely left us a single caricature. Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have mentioned, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings. There are, for instance, four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom, Mr.

Edward Ferrars, Mr. Henry Tilney, Mr. Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class. They have all been liberally educated. They all lie under the restraints of the same sacred profession. They are all young. They are all in love. Not one of them has any hobby-horse, to use the phrase of Sterne. Not one has a ruling passion, such as we read of in Pope. Who would not have expected them to be insipid likenesses of each other? No such thing. Harpagon is not more unlike to Jourdain, Joseph Surface is not more unlike to Sir Lucius O'Trigger, than every one of Miss Austen's young divines to his reverend brethren. And almost all this is done by touches so delicate that they elude analysis, that they defy the powers of description, and that we know them to exist only by the general effect to which they have contributed."

Like Shakespeare Jane Austen knew the inner nature by intuition, and had learned its outward expression by observation. Character not only affects the speech of each one of her men and women, but determines their destiny and shapes the plot of the story. The class she has chosen to represent is the least under the sway of circumstances of any in England. With money for all needs, and leisure for enjoyment, free from obligations which pertain to

higher rank, character here develops freely and naturally. Not one of the matchmaking men or women, not even the intelligent Emma, succeeds in changing the life of those whom they attempt to influence. Character is stronger than any outside agency. In this respect, Jane Austen is decidedly at variance with Thomas Hardy or Tolstoi, but she is at one with Shakespeare.

In the opening paragraph of each book, character begins to assert itself. If Darcy had been without PRIDE, and Elizabeth had been without PREJUDICE; if Marianne had had her sensibilities under control; if Emma had not been blind; if Captain Wentworth had not been unjust and resentful—there would have been no story to tell, the course of true love would have run so smooth. But all of them are loving and faithful, and these qualities in the end conquer, and bring the stories to a happy conclusion.

Edmund Gosse thus writes of her delineation of character:

"Like Balzac, like Tourgenieff at his best, Jane Austen gives the reader an impression of knowing everything there was to know about her creations, of being incapable of error as to their acts, thoughts, or emotions. She presents an absolute illusion of reality; she exhibits an art so consummate that we mistake it for

nature. She never mixes her own temperament with those of her characters, she is never swayed by them, she never loses for a moment her perfect, serene control of them. Among the creators of the world, Jane Austen takes a place that is with the highest and that is purely her own."

This seeming control of her characters is due largely to the fact that whatever happens to them is just what might have been expected. This is particularly true of the bad people she has created. Innocence led astray has been a popular means of exciting interest ever since Richardson told the sad story of Clarissa Harlowe. But there is no such incident in Jane Austen's books. Lydia, who has n't a thought for anybody nor anything but a red-coat, and Wickham, who elopes with her without any intention of matrimony, are properly punished, by being married to each other, and the future unhappiness which must be their lot is due to their own natures. Willoughby had seduced one girl, trifled with the affections of another, and married an heiress, but he finds only misery, and sadly says: "I must rub through the world as well as I can." Henry Crawford, and his sister, with so much that is good in their natures, yet with a lack of moral fibre, are both unhappy. Each has lost the one they respected and loved and might have married. With what wit she

leaves William Elliot, the all-agreeable man, the heir of Sir Walter, who, that he may keep the latter single, has enticed the scheming Mrs. Clay from his home:

"And it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning or hers may finally carry the day; whether, after preventing her from being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be wheedled and caressed at last into making her the wife of Sir William."

And so punishment is meted out with that nicety of judgment which distinguishes every detail of her novels.

But Jane Austen has little interest in immorality. "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery; I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can," she says in *Mansfield Park*. And her readers have observed that deeds of evil take place off the stage, while she records only what is reported of them in the drawing-room.

She dwells as little on misery as on guilt. She shows in her letters charitable regard for the poor people of Steventon and Chawton. She describes minutely the unkempt house of Lieutenant Price at Portsmouth with its incessant noise of heavy steps, banging doors, and untrained servants, where every voice was loud excepting Mrs. Price's, which resembled "the soft monotony of Lady Bertram's, only worn into fretfulness." Miss Austen's pen was

able to portray scenes of squalor and vice; she chose to turn from them. Perhaps she felt instinctively that true æsthetic pleasure cannot be produced by dwelling on a scene in a book which would be repulsive to the eye. Miss Austen wrote before there was much serious interest in the lives of the poor. Their only function in literature had been to provoke laughter. The sensitive daughter of the rector of Steventon may have felt, as others have, that there was no occasion to laugh at the blunders and ill-manners of peasants, which were proper and natural to their condition of life. She did not need these people to entertain us. There were quite as funny people in the hall as in the cottage, funnier, even, because their humorous sayings spring from a humorous twist in their natures, not from ignorance.

Sir Walter Scott, after reading *Pride and Prejudice* for the third time, said:

"That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me."

Sir Walter Scott proved the truth of the above

statement in *St. Ronan's Well*, one of the least successful of his novels, which was written in imitation of Jane Austen.

Because Jane Austen confined her work so closely to ordinary middle-class people, she has been called narrow. But if we judge men and women not by dress and manners, but by what they are, these people furnish as broad a view of humanity as could be obtained by travelling up and down the world. A trained botanist will gather an herbarium from a country lane that will give a more extended knowledge of botany than a less skilful one could get by travelling through the woods and fields of a continent. Very few novelists have portrayed greater varieties of human nature than Miss Austen.

Jane Austen's style has been praised by all critics. George William Curtis wrote of her art:

"She writes wholly as an artist, while George Eliot advocates views, and Miss Brontë's fiery page is often a personal protest. In Miss Austen, on the other hand, there is in kind, but infinitely less in degree, the same clear atmosphere of pure art which we perceive in Shakespeare and Goethe."

While Miss Austen has been so often likened to Shakespeare, she is in no sense a romantic writer. She belongs purely to the classic

school. She has the restraint, the perfect poise of the Greeks. She recognises everywhere the need of law. She accepts society as it exists under the restraints of law and religion. She no more questioned the English prayer book and the English constitution than Homer questioned the existence of the gods and the supreme power of kings. This feeling for law shaped her art. Her plots are perfectly symmetrical. There is no redundancy in expression. There is none of that wild luxuriance in fancy or expression so common in romanticism. Each word used is needed in the sentence, and is in its proper place. The strength of romanticism lies in its impetuosity; the strength of classicism lies in its self-control. This is the strength of Jane Austen.

Emotion in her books is so restrained that the superficial reader doubts its existence. Yet her characters feel deeply and are sensitive to the acts and words of those about them. Although their feelings are under control, they are none the less real. The reader watches, but is not asked to participate in their griefs.

As she never moves to tears, neither does she provoke laughter, but she lightens every page with a quiet glow of humour. Humour was as natural to her as to Elizabeth Bennet, whose sayings give the sparkle to *Pride and Prejudice*. Much of the humour in her letters consists of an

unexpected turn to a sentence or an incongruous combination of words. She writes of meeting "Dr. Hall in such very deep mourning that either his mother, his wife or himself must be dead." She announces the marriage of a gentleman to a widow by the laconic message, "Dr. Gardiner was married yesterday to Mrs. Percy and her three daughters." And again she says that a certain Mrs. Blount appeared the same as in September, "with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, and fat neck." She sees through the affectations of society and observes the pleasure afforded by the small misfortunes of another as plainly as did Thackeray later. The wife of a certain gentleman is discovered "to be everything the neighbourhood could wish, silly and cross as well as extravagant." She finds continual source of enjoyment in people's foibles, and thinks that her own misfortunes ought to furnish jokes to her acquaintances, or she will die in their debt for entertainment.

In a less refined degree, this was the view of life of Miss Burney, her favourite author. Miss Austen was but three years old when Evelina made her début at Ranelagh, and not over seven when Cecilia visited her three guardians in London: *Camilla* was published in the year that it is thought that Miss Austen began *Pride and Prejudice*. During these years, Miss Bur-

ney's fame was undimmed. Consider yourself for a moment in a circulating library, in the year 1797 or 1798, suppose you are fond of novel reading, and have moreover the refined tastes of Miss Austen; you will find there no novelist who can hold a rival place to Miss Burney. Miss Austen refers to her both in her novels and letters. In only one passage in her novels has she interrupted her story to express a general opinion; that is in *Northanger Abbey*, where she praises the art of the novelist, and refers particularly to *Cecilia*, *Camilla*, and *Belinda*. In the same novel John Thorpe's lack of taste is emphasised by his calling *Camilla* a stupid book of unnatural stuff, which he could not get through. She evidently discussed Miss Burney's novels with the people she met; a certain young man just entered at Oxford has heard that *Evelina* was written by Dr. Johnson, and she finds two traits in a certain Miss Fletcher very pleasing: "She admires *Camilla*, and drinks no cream in her tea." But Miss Austen was no blind disciple of Miss Burney. All the odd characters which Miss Burney culled from the lower ranks of society were swept away by Miss Austen. Everything approaching tragedy or the improbable is avoided, but what is left is amplified and refined until there is no more trace of Miss Burney than there is of Perugino in the paintings of Raphael.

Artists in other lines have striven in their work for a unified whole. Most novelists have been more intent on pointing a moral or producing a sensation than on the technique of their writing. Their works as a whole lack proportion. They obtrude unnecessarily in one part and are weak in another. Miss Austen wrote because the characters in her brain demanded expression. Who could remain silent with Elizabeth Bennet urging her to utterance? She wrote with the greatest care because she could do nothing slovenly. Whatever place may be assigned to her as the years go by, her novels surpass all others written in English in their perfect art.

Miss Austen's genius was but slowly recognised. Her first books were published in 1811, only three years before *Waverley*, and her last novels were published after it. Who will linger over the teacups while knights in armour are riding the streets without? It is not until the cavalcade has passed that home seems again a quiet, refreshing spot. So the public, tired of the brilliant scenes and conflicting passions of other novels, has in the last few years turned back to the simple, wholesome stories of Jane Austen.

CHAPTER XI

Miss Ferrier. Miss Mitford. Anna Maria Hall

WALTER SCOTT, the most chivalrous of all writers, brought to an end woman's supremacy in the novel, in 1814. At this time prose fiction was far different from what it was in 1772, when Tobias Smollet died, and much of this difference was due to women. Professor Masson, in his lectures on the novel, gives the names of twenty novelists who wrote between 1789–1814 who are remembered in the history of English literature. "With the exception of Godwin," he writes, "I do not know that any of the male novelists I have mentioned could be put in comparison, in respect of genuine merit, with such novelists of the other sex as Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Austen." It is equally worthy of note that, of the twenty names given, fourteen are women.

Although during these years women had developed the historical novel, and had brought the novel of mystery to a high degree of perfection,

they left the most enduring stamp on literature as realists, as painters of everyday life and commonplace people. Francis Jeffrey wrote:

"It required almost the same courage to get rid of the jargon of fashionable life and the swarms of peers, foundlings, and seducers, that infested our modern fables as it did in those days to sweep away the mythological persons of antiquity, and to introduce characters who spoke and acted like those who were to peruse their adventures."

Women awakened interest in the humdrum lives of their neighbours next door, and this without any exaggeration, simply by minute attention to little things, and quick sympathy in the joys and sorrows of others. They described manners and customs; their view of life was largely objective. It is a noteworthy fact that while Scott was casting over all Europe the light of romanticism, the women writers of the time, with but one or two exceptions, were viewing life with the clear vision of Miss Edgeworth and Miss Austen, as if the world obtruded too glaringly upon their eyes to be lost sight of in happy day-dreams.

Susan Edmonstone Ferrier is better known to-day as the friend of Scott, and an occasional visitor at Abbotsford, than as a successful novelist. She was born at Edinburgh in 1782,

where her father, James Ferrier, was Writer to the Signet, and at one time Clerk of Session, Scott being one of his colleagues. That great genius was one of the earliest to appreciate the excellence of her descriptions of Scottish life given in her first book, entitled *Marriage*, published anonymously in 1818. In the conclusion of the *Tales of my Landlord* he paid the unknown writer this graceful tribute:

"There remains behind not only a large harvest, but labourers capable of gathering it in; more than one writer has of late displayed talents of this description, and if the present author, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother, or perhaps a sister, shadow, he would mention in particular the author of the very lively work entitled *Marriage*."

Miss Ferrier wrote but three novels, *Marriage*, *The Inheritance*, and *Destiny*, a period of six years intervening between the appearance of each of them. Like Miss Burney and Miss Edgeworth she depicts two grades of society. She shows forth the fashionable life of Edinburgh and London, and the cruder mode of living found in the Scottish Highlands. But between her and her models there is the great difference of genius and talent. They passed what they had seen through the alembic of imagination; she has depicted what she saw with the faithfulness of the camera, and the

crude realism of these scenes does not always blend with the warp and woof of the story.

Like Miss Edgeworth, Miss Ferrier had a moral to work out. She treats society as a satirist, and lays bare its heartlessness, and the unhappiness of its members who to escape ennui are led hither and thither by the caprice of the moment. While she may present one side of the picture, one hesitates to accept Lady Juliana, Mrs. St. Clair, or Lady Elizabeth as common types of a London drawing-room.

Her plots as well as her characters suffer from this conscious attempt to teach the happiness that must follow the practice of the Christian virtues. In *Marriage* there are two complete stories. Lady Juliana is the heroine of the first part; her two daughters, who are born in the first half, supplant their mother as heroines of the second half. The plot of *Destiny* is not much better. The denouement is tame, and the characters lack consistency. *The Inheritance* has the strongest plot of the three; but Mrs. St. Clair and her secret interviews with the monstrosity Lewiston, who, by the way, has the honour to be an American, throw an air of unreality over a story in many respects intensely real. In this story, as in so many old novels, the nurse's daughter had been brought up as the rightful heiress. The scene in which she tells her betrothed lover, the heir of the

estate, the story of her birth, which she had just learned, is said to have suggested to Tennyson the beautiful ballad of *Lady Clare*.

But when Miss Ferrier sees loom in imagination the sombre purple hills of the Highlands, with the black tarns in the hollows half-hidden in mist, her genius awakes. If she had devoted herself to these people and this region, and ignored the fashionable life of the cities, she might have written a book worthy to be placed beside the best of Miss Edgeworth or Miss Mitford. At the time she wrote, the Highland chief no longer summoned his clan about him at a blast from his bugle, but he had lost little of his old-time picturesqueness. The opening of *Destiny* describes the wealth of the chief of Glenroy:

"All the world knows that there is nothing on earth to be compared to a Highland chief. He has his loch and his islands, his mountains and his castle, his piper and his tartan, his forests and his deer, his thousands of acres of untrodden heath, and his tens of thousands of black-faced sheep, and his bands of bonneted clansmen, with claymores and Gaelic, and hot blood and dirks."

But Miss Ferrier also depicted a more sordid type of Highlander. Christopher North in his *Noctes Ambrosianæ* writes of her novels:

"They are the works of a very clever woman,

sir, and they have one feature of true and melancholy interest quite peculiar to themselves. It is in them alone that the ultimate breaking-down and debasement of the Highland character has been depicted. Sir Walter Scott had fixed the enamel of genius over the last fitful gleams of their half-savage chivalry, but a humbler and sadder scene—the age of lucre-banished clans, —of chieftains dwindled into imitation squires, and of chiefs content to barter the recollections of a thousand years for a few gaudy seasons of Almacks and Crockfords, the euthanasia of kilted aldermen and steamboat pibrochs, was reserved for Miss Ferrier."

Besides her descriptions of the Highlands, Miss Ferrier has drawn several Scotch characters that deserve to live. What a delightful group is described in *Marriage*, consisting of the three Misses Douglas, known as "The girls," and their friend Mrs. Maclaughlan! Miss Jacky Douglas, the senior of the trio, "was reckoned a woman of sense"; Miss Grizzy was distinguished by her good-nature and the entanglement of her thoughts; and it was said that Miss Nicky was "not wanting for sense either"; while their friend Lady Maclaughlan loved and tyrannised over all three of them. Sir Walter Scott admired the character of Miss Becky Duguid, a poor old maid, who "was expected to attend all accouchements,

christenings, deaths, chestings, and burials, but she was seldom asked to a marriage, and never to any party of pleasure." Joanna Baillie thought the loud-spoken minister, M'Dow, a true representative of a few of the Scotch clergy whose only aim is preferment and good cheer. But none of her other characters can compare with the devoted Mrs. Molly Macaulay, the friend of the Chief of Glenroy in *Destiny*. When Glenroy has an attack of palsy, she hurries to him, and when she is told that he has missed her, she exclaims with perfect self-forgetfulness:

"Deed, and I thought he would do that, for he has always been so kind to me,—and I thought sometimes when I was away, oh, thinks I to myself, I wonder what Glenroy will do for somebody to be angry with,—for Benbowie 's grown so deaf, poor creature, it 's not worth his while to be angry at him,—and you 're so gentle that it would not do for him to be angry at you; but I 'm sure he has a good right to be angry at me, considering how kind he has always been to me."

Christopher North said of Molly Macaulay, "No sinner of our gender could have adequately filled up the outline."

George Saintsbury, considering the permanent value of Miss Ferrier's work, wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1882:

"Of the four requisites of the novelist, plot,

character, description, and dialogue, she is only weak in the first. The lapse of an entire half-century and a complete change of manners have put her books to the hardest test they are ever likely to have to endure, and they come through it triumphantly."

But, besides the excellences mentioned by Mr. Saintsbury, Miss Ferrier is master of humour and pathos. No story is sadder than that of Ronald Malcolm, the hero of *Destiny*. He had been willed the castle of Inch Orran with its vast estates, but with the provision that he was to have no benefit from it until his twenty-sixth year. In case of his death the property was to go to his father, an upright but poor man. As Ronald had many years to wait before he could enjoy his riches, he entered the navy. His ship was lost at sea and the news of his death reported in Scotland. But Ronald had been rescued from the sinking ship, and returned to his father's cottage. Here he met a purblind old woman, who told him how his father, Captain Malcolm, had moved to the castle, and what good he was doing among his tenantry. She described the sorrow of the people at the death of Ronald, but added: "Och! it was God's providence to tak' the boy out of his worthy father's way; and noo a' thing 's as it should be, and he has gotten his ain, honest man; and long, long may he enjoy it!" And then she said

thankfully, "The poor lad's death was a great blessing—och ay, 'deed was 't." The scene where Ronald goes to the castle and looks in at the window upon the happy family group, consisting of his father and mother, brothers and sisters, resembles in many particulars the sad return of Enoch Arden. The close of the scene is as touching in the novel as in the poem: "Yes, yes, they are happy, and I am forgotten!" sobs the lad, as he turns away.

Miss Ferrier, however, seldom touches the pathetic; she is first of all a humourist. But there is a blending of the smiles and tears of human life in the delightful character of Adam Ramsay. Engaged as a boy to Lizzie Lundie, he had gone forth into the world to make a fortune, but when he returned after many years he found that she had married in his absence, and soon afterwards had died. Crabbed to all about him, he still cherished the remembrance of his early love, and was quickly moved by any appeal to her memory.

The practical philosophy of the Scottish peasantry is amusingly set forth in the scene where Miss St. Clair visits one of the cottages on Lord Rossville's estate. She found the goodman very ill, and everything about the room betokening extreme poverty. When she offered to send him milk and broth, and a carpet and chairs to make the room more comfortable,

his wife interposed, "A suit o' gude bein comfortable dead claise, Tammes, wad set ye better than aw the braw chyres an' carpets i' the toon." Sometime afterward, when Miss St. Clair called to see how the invalid was, she found him in the press-bed, while the clothes were warming before the fire. His wife explained that she could not have him in the way, and if he were cold, it could not be helped, as the clothes had to be aired, and added, "An' I 'm thinkin' he 'll no be lang o' wantin' them noo."

But notwithstanding her humour, Miss Ferrier was a stern moralist, whose attitude toward life had been influenced indirectly by the teachings of John Knox. She sometimes seems to stand her characters in the stocks, and call upon the populace to view their sins or absurdities. She seldom throws the veil of charity over them. Men as novelists are prone to exaggeration. Women have represented life with greater truth both in its larger aspects and in details. Miss Ferrier carries this quality to an extreme. She tells not only the truth, but, with almost heartless honesty, reveals the whole of it, so that many of her men and women are repugnant to the reader while they amuse him. The best judges of Scottish manners have borne witness to the exactness of her portraiture. She is, perhaps, an example of the artistic failure of over-realism.

Mary Russell Mitford like Miss Ferrier painted her scenes and her portraits from real life. But there is as wide a difference between their writings as between the rocky ledges of the Grampian Hills and the soft meadows bathed in the sunshine which stretch back of the cottages of Our Village. Miss Mitford's, indeed, was a sunny nature, not to be hardened nor embittered by a lifelong anxiety over poverty and debts. Her father, Dr. Mitford, had spent nearly all his own fortune when he married Miss Mary Russell, an heiress. Besides being constantly involved in lawsuits, he was addicted to gambling, and soon squandered the fortune which his wife had brought him, besides twenty thousand pounds won in a lottery. He is said to have lost in speculations and at play about seventy thousand pounds, at that time a large fortune. The authoress was a little over thirty years of age when the poverty of the family forced them to leave Bertram House, their home for many years, and remove to a little labourer's cottage about a mile away, on the principal street of a little village near Reading, known as Three Mile Cross. Here the support of the family devolved upon the daughter, a burden made harder by the continual extravagance of the father, whom she devotedly loved. Although she received large sums for her writings, it is with the greatest weariness that she

writes to her friend Miss Barrett, afterwards Mrs. Browning, of the struggles that have been hers the greater part of her life, the ten or twelve hours of literary drudgery each day, often in spite of ill health, and her hope that she may always provide for her father his accustomed comforts. Not only was she enabled to do this, but, through the help of friends, to pay, after his death, the one thousand pounds indebtedness, his only legacy to her.

Yet there is not a trace of this worry in the delightful series of papers called *Our Village*, which she began to contribute at this time to the *Lady's Magazine*. Before this she had become known as a poet and a successful playwright, but had believed herself incapable of writing good prose. Necessity revealed her fine power of description, and Three Mile Cross furnished her with scenes and characters.

Our Village marked a new style in fiction. The year it was commenced, she wrote to a friend:

"With regard to novels, I should like to see one undertaken without any plot at all. I do not mean that it should have no story; but I should like some writer of luxuriant fancy to begin with a certain set of characters—one family, for instance—without any preconceived design farther than one or two incidents or dialogues, which would naturally suggest fresh

matter, and so proceed in this way, throwing in incidents and characters profusely, but avoiding all stage tricks and strong situations, till some death or marriage should afford a natural conclusion to the book."

Miss Mitford followed this plan as far as her great love of nature would permit. For when she found her daily cares too great to be borne in the little eight-by-eight living-room, she escaped to the woods and fields. She loved the poets who wrote of nature, and next to Miss Austen, whom she placed far above any other novelist, she delighted in the novels of Charlotte Smith, and in her own pages there is the same true feeling for nature.

Our Village follows in a few particulars Gilbert White's *History of Selborne*. As he described the beauties of Selborne through the varying seasons of the year, she describes her walks about Three Mile Cross, first when the meadows are covered with hoar frost, then when the air is perfumed with violets, and later when the harvest field is yellow with ripened corn. All the lanes, the favourite banks, the shady recesses are described with delicate and loving touch. How her own joyous, optimistic nature speaks in this record of a morning walk in a backward spring:

"Cold bright weather. All within doors, sunny and chilly; all without, windy and dusty.

It is quite tantalising to see that brilliant sun careering through so beautiful a sky, and to feel little more warmth from his presence than one does from that of his fair but cold sister, the moon. Even the sky, beautiful as it is, has the look of that one sometimes sees in a very bright moonlight night—deeply, intensely blue, with white fleecy clouds driven vigorously along by a strong breeze, now veiling and now exposing the dazzling luminary around whom they sail. A beautiful sky! and, in spite of its coldness, a beautiful world!"

But how naturally we meet the people of the village and become interested in them. There is Harriet, the belle of the village, "a flirt passive," who made the tarts and puddings in the author's kitchen; Joel Brent, her lover, a carter by calling, but, by virtue of his personal accomplishments, the village beau. There is the publican, the carpenter, the washerwoman; little Lizzie, the spoilt child, and all the other boys and girls of the village. It is very natural to-day to meet these poor people in novels; at that time the poor people of Ireland and Scotland had begun to creep into fiction, but it was as unusual in England as a novel without a plot. Even to-day Miss Mitford's attitude toward these people is not common. It seems never to have occurred to the author, and certainly does not to her readers, that these men

dressed in overalls and these women in print dresses with sleeves rolled to the elbow were not the finest ladies and gentlemen of the land. She greets them all with a playful humour which reminds one of the genial smile of Elia. C. H. Herford in *The Age of Wordsworth* wrote of *Our Village:*

"No such intimate and sympathetic portrayal of village life had been given before, and perhaps it needed a woman's sympathetic eye for little things to show the way. Of the professional story-teller on the alert for a sensation there is as little as of the professional novelist on the watch for a lesson."

Belford Regis, a series of country and town sketches, was written soon after the completion of *Our Village*. Here again is the happy blending of nature and humanity; the same fusion of truth and fiction. As Belford Regis is "Our Market Town," there is a wider range of characters, as different classes are represented; and a more intimate view, since the same people appear in more than one story. Stephen Lane, the butcher, and his wife are often met with. He is so fat that "when he walks, he overfills the pavement, and is more difficult to pass than a link of full-dressed misses or a chain of becloaked dandies." Of Mrs. Lane she writes: "Butcher's wife and butcher's daughter though she were, yet was she a graceful and gracious

woman, one of nature's gentlewomen in look and in thought." There was Miss Savage, "who was called a sensible woman because she had a gruff voice and vinegar aspect"; and Miss Steele, who was called literary, because forty years ago she made a grand poetical collection. Miss Mitford even does justice to Mrs. Hollis, the fruiterer and the village gossip: "There she sits, a tall, square, upright figure, surmounted by a pleasant, comely face, eyes as black as a sloe, cheeks as round as an apple, and a complexion as ruddy as a peach, as fine a specimen of a healthy, hearty English tradeswoman, the feminine of John Bull, as one would desire to see on a summer's day. . . . As a gossip she was incomparable. She knew everybody and everything; had always the freshest intelligence, and the newest news; her reports like her plums had the bloom on them, and she would as much have scorned to palm upon you an old piece of scandal as to send you strawberries that had been two days gathered."

A reviewer in the *Athenæum* thus criticises the book:

"If (to be hypercritical) the pictures they contain be a trifle too sunny and too cheerful to be real—if they show more generosity and refinement and self-sacrifice existing among the middle classes than does exist,—too much

of the meek beauty, too little of the squalidity of humble life,—we love them none the less, and their authoress all the more."

In *Belford Regis* we miss the fields, the brooks, the flowers, and the sky, which made the charm of *Our Village*. In some respects it is a more ambitious book, but it has not the perennial charm of *Our Village*.

Miss Mitford's favourite author, as we have seen, was Jane Austen. She had the same regard for her that Miss Austen felt for Fanny Burney. The two authors have many points of resemblance. Both have the same clear vision, and sunny nature; the same repugnance to all that is sensational, or coarse, or low; the same dislike of strong pathos or broad humour; and Miss Mitford has approached more closely than any other writer to the elegance of diction and purity of style of Miss Austen.

They have another point in common, they both show excellent taste in their writings. This quality of good taste is due to native delicacy and refinement, a sensitive withdrawal from what is ugly, and a quick feeling for true proportion; the very things which give to a woman her superior tact, which Ruskin has called "the touch sense." In the novel it is pre-eminently a feminine characteristic. Few men have it in a marked degree. It adds all the charm we feel in the presence of a refined

woman to the novels of Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen, and Miss Mitford.

But, while Miss Mitford and Miss Austen have many points of resemblance, they have many points of difference. Miss Austen liked the society of men and women, and during her younger days was fond of dinner-parties and balls. Miss Mitford preferred the woods and fields, liked the society of her dogs, and wrote to a friend before she was twenty that she would never go to another dance if she could help it. Miss Austen selects a small group of gentry, and by the intertwining of their lives forms a beautiful plot; Miss Mitford rambles through the village and the country walks of Three Mile Cross, and as she meets the butcher, the publican, the boys at cricket, she gleans some story of interest, and brings back to us, as it were, a basket in which have been thrown in careless profusion violets and anemones, cowslips and daisies, and all the other flowers of the field.

Mrs. Anna Maria Hall, a country-woman of Miss Edgeworth, wrote of her first novel: "My *Sketches of Irish Character*, my first dear book, was inspired by a desire to describe my native place, as Miss Mitford had done in *Our Village*, and this made me an author." Most of these sketches were drawn from the

county of Wexford, her native place, whose inhabitants, she says in the preface, are descendants of the Anglo-Norman settlers of the reign of Henry the Second, and speak a language unknown in other districts of Ireland.

The book is a series of well-told stories of the poor people, whom we should have imagined to be pure Celt, if the author had not said they resembled the English. There is the tender pathos, the quick humour, the joke which often answers an argument, the guidance of the heart rather than the head; but she has dwelt upon one characteristic but lightly touched upon by Miss Edgeworth and Lady Morgan, the poetic feeling of the Celt, the imagery that so often adorns their common speech. The old Irish wife says to the bride who speaks disrespectfully of the fairies: "Hush, Avourneen! Sure they have the use of the May-dew before it falls, and the colour of the lilies and the roses before it 's folded in the tender buds; and can steal the notes out of the birds' throats while they sleep."

The Irish Peasantry, and *Lights and Shadows of Irish Life*, won Mrs. Hall the ill-will rather than the love of her countrymen. She had lived for a long time in England, and upon returning to her native land was impressed by the lack of forethought which kept the country poor. Their early marriages, their indifference to time, their frequent visits to the public house,

their hospitality to strangers even when they themselves were in extreme poverty and debt—all made so deep an impression upon her mind that she attempted to teach the Irish worldly wisdom. But the lesson was distasteful to the people and probably useless, as the characteristics which she would change were the very essence of the Irish nature, the traits which made him a Celt, not a Saxon. In these books, the wooings, weddings, and funerals are portrayed, and there is a little glimpse of fairy lore.

Midsummer Eve, a Fairy Tale of Love, grew out of the fairy legends of Ireland. It is said that a child whose father has died before its birth is placed by nature under the peculiar guardianship of the fairies; and, if born on Midsummer Eve, it becomes their rightful property; they take it to their own homes and leave in its place one of their changelings. The heroine of the story is a child of that nature, over whose birth the fairies of air, earth, and water preside. But at the will of Nightstar, Queen of the Fairies of the Air, she is left with her mother, but adopted and watched over by the fairies as their own. Their great gift to her is that of loving and being loved. The human element is not well blended with the fairy element. The entire setting should have been rural, for in the city of London, particularly in the exhibition of the Royal Academy, where

part of the story is placed, it is not easy to keep the tranquil twilight atmosphere, which fairies love. The book is like a song in which the bass and soprano are written in different keys. But when we are back in Ireland, and the fairies again appear and disappear, it is charming. The old woodcutter, Randy, who sees and talks with the fairies, is a delightful creature, and gives to the story much of its beauty.

Mrs. Hall's novels have but little literary value, but she has brought to light Irish characteristics and Irish traditions which were overlooked by her predecessors, and for that reason they deserve to live.

CHAPTER XII

Lady Caroline Lamb. Mrs. Shelley

IT is impossible to comprehend the Byronic craze which swept cool-headed England off her feet during the regency. *Childe Harold* was the fashion, and many a hero of romance, even down to the time of *Pendennis*, aped his fashions. Disraeli and Bulwer were among his disciples. Bulwer's early novels, *Falkland* and *Pelham*, were influenced by him; and *Vivian Grey* and *Venetia* might have been the offspring of Byron's prose brain, so completely was Disraeli under his influence at the time.

The poorest of the novels of this class, but the one which gives the most intimate picture of Byron, is *Glenarvon*, by Lady Caroline Lamb. Its hero is Byron. The plot follows the outlines of her own life, and all the characters were counterparts of living people whom she knew. Calantha, the heroine, representing Lady Caroline, is married to Lord Avondale, or William Lamb, better known as Lord Melbourne, at one time Premier of England. Lord and Lady Avondale are very happy, until Glenarvon,

"the spirit of evil," appears and dazzles Calantha. Twice she is about to elope with him, but the thought of her husband and children keeps her back. They part, and for a time tender *billets-doux* pass between them, until Calantha receives a cruel letter from Glenarvon, in which he bids her leave him in peace. Other well-known people appeared in the book. Lord Holland was the Great Nabob, Lady Holland was the Princess of Madagascar, and Samuel Rogers was the Yellow Hyena or the Pale Poet. The novel had also a moral purpose; it was intended to show the danger of a life devoted to pleasure and fashion.

Of course the book made a sensation. Lady Caroline Lamb, the daughter of Earl Bessborough, the granddaughter of Earl Spencer, related to nearly all the great houses of England, had all her life followed every impulse of a too susceptible imagination. Her infatuation for Lord Byron had long been a theme for gossip throughout London. She invited him constantly to her home; went to assemblies in his carriage; and, if he were invited to parties to which she was not, walked the streets to meet him; she confided to every chance acquaintance that she was dying of love for him. Yet, as one reads of this affair, one suspects that this devotion was nothing more than the infatuation of a high-strung nature for the hero of a

romance. In writing to a friend about her husband, she says, "He was privy to my affair with Lord Byron and laughed at it." On her death-bed she said of her husband, "But remember, the only noble fellow I ever met with was William Lamb."

A month after her death, Lord Melbourne wrote a sketch of her life for the *Literary Gazette*. In this he said:

"Her character it is difficult to analyse, because, owing to the extreme susceptibility of her imagination, and the unhesitating and rapid manner in which she followed its impulses, her conduct was one perpetual kaleidoscope of changes. . . . To the poor she was invariably charitable—she was more: in spite of her ordinary thoughtlessness of self, for them she had consideration as well as generosity, and delicacy no less than relief. For her friends she had a ready and active love; for her enemies no hatred: never perhaps was there a human being who had less malevolence; as all her errors hurt only herself, so against herself only were levelled her accusation and reproach."

How far Byron was in earnest in this tragi-comedy is more difficult to determine. In one letter to her he writes: "I was and am yours, freely and entirely, to obey, to honour, to love, and fly with you, where, when, and how yourself might and may determine." That Byron

was piqued when he read the book, his letter to Moore proves: "By the way, I suppose you have seen *Glenarvon.* It seems to me if the authoress had written the truth—the whole truth—the romance would not only have been more romantic, but more entertaining. As for the likeness, the picture can't be good; I did not sit long enough." It was not pleasing to Lord Byron's vanity to appear in her book as the spirit of evil, beside her husband, a high-minded gentleman, ready to sacrifice for his friends everything "but his honour and integrity."

Notwithstanding the humorous elements in the connection of Lord Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb, the story is pathetic. His poetic personality attracted her as the light does the poor moth. Disraeli caricatured her in the character of Mrs. Felix Lorraine in *Vivian Grey,* and introduced her into *Venetia* under the title of Lady Monteagle, where he made much of her love for the poet Cadurcis, otherwise Lord Byron.

Lady Caroline Lamb wrote two other novels, but they are of no value. In her third, *Ada Reis,* considered her best, she introduced Bulwer as the good spirit.

The little poem written by Lady Caroline Lamb on the day fixed for her departure from Brocket Hall, after it had been decided that

she was to live in retirement away from her husband and son, shows tenderness and poetic feeling:

> They dance—they sing—they bless the day,
> I weep the while—and well I may:
> Husband, nor child, to greet me come,
> Without a friend—without a home:
> I sit beneath my favourite tree,
> Sing then, my little birds, to me,
> In music, love, and liberty.

At the time that the British public was smiling graciously, even if a little humorously, upon Lady Caroline Lamb, and was lionising Lord Byron, it spurned from its presence with the greatest disdain Percy and Mary Shelley. Even after the death of Shelley, when Mary returned to London with herself and son to support, it received her as the prodigal daughter for whom the crumbs from the rich man's table must suffice.

Mary Shelley had inherited from her mother the world's frown. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin had been, the greater part of her life, at variance with society. She was the author, as has been said, of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and had for a long time been an opponent of marriage, chiefly because the civil laws pertaining to it deprived both husband and wife of their proper liberty. Her bitter experience with Imlay had, however, so modi-

fied her views on this latter subject that she became the wife of William Godwin a short time before the birth of their daughter Mary, who in after years became Mrs. Shelley. Although her mother died at her birth, Mary Godwin was deeply imbued with her theories of life. She had read her books, and had often heard her father express the same views concerning the bondage of marriage and its uselessness. Her elopement with Shelley while his wife Harriet was still living gains a certain sanction from the fact that she plighted her troth to him at her mother's grave. After the sad death of Harriet, however, Shelley and Mary Godwin conceded to the world's opinion, and were legally married. But the anger of society was not appeased, and, even after both had become famous, it continued to ignore the poet Shelley and his gifted wife.

At the age of nineteen Mrs. Shelley was led to write her first novel. Mr. and Mrs. Shelley and Byron were spending the summer of 1816 in the mountains of Switzerland. Continuous rain kept them in-doors, where they passed the time in reading ghost stories. At the suggestion of Byron, each one agreed to write a blood-curdling tale. It is one of the strange freaks of invention that this young girl succeeded where Shelley and Byron failed. Byron wrote a fragment of a story which was printed

with *Mazeppa*. Shelley also began a story, but when he had reduced his characters to a most pitiable condition, he wearied of them and could devise no way to bring the tale to a fitting conclusion. After listening to a conversation between the two poets upon the possibilities of science discovering the secrets of life, the story known as *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* shaped itself in Mary's mind.

Frankenstein is one of those novels that defy the critic. Everyone recognises that the letters written by Captain Walton to his sister in which he tells of his meeting with Frankenstein, and repeats to her the story he has just heard from his guest, makes an awkward introduction to the real narrative. Yet all this part about Captain Walton and his crew was added at the suggestion of Shelley after the rest of the story had been written. But the narrative of Frankenstein is so powerful, so real, that, once read, it can never be forgotten. Mrs. Shelley wrote in the introduction of the edition of 1839 that, before writing it, she was trying to think of a story, "one that would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood and quicken the beatings of the heart." That she has done this the experience of every reader will prove.

But the story has a greater hold on the

imagination than this alone would give it. The monster created by Frankenstein is closely related to our own human nature. "My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy," he says, "and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture, such as you cannot even imagine." There is a wonderful blending of good and evil in this demon, and, while the magnitude of his crimes makes us shudder, his wrongs and his loneliness awaken our pity. "The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am quite alone," the monster complains to his creator. Who can forget the scene where he watches Frankenstein at work making for him the companion that he had promised? Perhaps sadder than the story of the monster is that of Frankenstein, who, led by a desire to widen human knowledge, finds that the fulfilment of his lofty ambition has brought only a curse to mankind.

In 1823, Mary Shelley published a second novel, *Valperga*, so named from a castle and small independent territory near Lucca. Castruccio Castracani, whose life Machiavelli has told, is the hero of the story. The greatest soldier and satirist of his times, the man of the novel is considered inferior to the man of

history. Mrs. Shelley had read broadly before beginning the book, and she has described minutely the customs of the age about which she is writing. Shelley pronounced it "a living and moving picture of an age almost forgotten."

The interest centres in the two heroines, Euthanasia, Countess of Valperga, and Beatrice, Prophetess of Ferrara. Strong, intellectual, and passionate, not until the time of George Eliot did women of this type become prominent in fiction. Euthanasia, a Guelph and a Florentine, with a soul "adapted for the reception of all good," was betrothed to the youth Castruccio, whom she at that time loved. Later, when his character deteriorated under the influence of selfish ambition, she ceased to love him, and said, "He cast off humanity, honesty, honourable feeling, all that I prize." Castruccio belonged to the Ghibelines, so that the story of their love is intertwined with the struggle between these two parties in Italy.

But more beautiful than the intellectual character of Euthanasia, is the spiritual one of Beatrice, the adopted daughter of the bishop of Ferrara, who is regarded with feelings of reverence by her countrymen, because of her prophetic powers. Pure and deeply religious, she accepted all the suggestions of her mind as a message from God. When Castruccio came to Ferrara and

was entertained by the bishop as the prince and liberator of his country, she believed that together they could accomplish much for her beloved country: "She prayed to the Virgin to inspire her; and, again giving herself up to reverie, she wove a subtle web, whose materials she believed heavenly, but which were indeed stolen from the glowing wings of love." No wonder she believed the dictates of her own heart, she whose words the superstition of the age had so often declared miraculous. She was barely seventeen and she loved for the first time. How pathetic is her disillusionment when Castruccio bade her farewell for a season, as he was about to leave Ferrara. She had believed that the Holy Spirit had brought Castruccio to her that by the union of his manly qualities and her divine attributes some great work might be fulfilled. But as he left her, he spoke only of earthly happiness:

"It was her heart, her whole soul she had given; her understanding, her prophetic powers, all the little universe that with her ardent spirit she grasped and possessed, she had surrendered, fully, and without reserve; but, alas! the most worthless part alone had been accepted, and the rest cast as dust upon the winds."

Afterwards, when she wandered forth a beggar, and was rescued by Euthanasia, she exclaimed to her:

"You either worship a useless shadow, or a fiend in the clothing of a God."

The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft could fully sympathise with Beatrice. In the grief, almost madness, with which Beatrice realises her self-deception, there are traces of Frankenstein. Perhaps no problem plucked from the tree of good and evil was so ever-present to Mary Shelley as why misery so often follows an obedience to the highest dictates of the soul. Both her father and mother had experienced this; and she and Shelley had tasted of the same bitter fruit. In the analysis of Beatrice's emotions Mrs. Shelley shows herself akin to Charlotte Brontë.

Three years after the death of Shelley, she published *The Last Man*. It relates to England in the year 2073 when, the king having abdicated his throne, England had become a republic. Soon after this, however a pestilence fell upon the people, which drove them upon the continent, where they travelled southward, until only one man remained. The plot is clumsy; the characters are abstractions.

But the feelings of the author, written in clear letters on every page, are a valuable addition to the history of the poet Shelley and his wife. Besides her fresh sorrow for her husband, Byron had died only the year before. Her mind was brooding on the days the three had

spent together. Her grief was too recent to be shaken from her mind or lost sight of in her imaginative work. Shelley, and the scenes she had looked on with him, the conversations between him and his friends, creep in on every page. Lionel Verney, the Last Man, is the supposed narrator of the story. He thus describes Adrian, the son of the king: "A tall, slim, fair boy, with a physiognomy expressive of the excess of sensibility and refinement, stood before me; the morning sunbeams tinged with gold his silken hair, and spread light and glory over his beaming countenance . . . he seemed like an inspired musician, who struck, with unerring skill, the 'lyre of mind,' and produced thence divinest harmony. . . . His slight frame was over informed by the soul that dwelt within. . . . He was gay as a lark carrolling from its skiey tower. . . . The young and inexperienced did not understand the lofty severity of his moral views, and disliked him as a being different from themselves." Shelley, of course, was the original of this picture. Lord Byron suggested the character of Lord Raymond: "The earth was spread out as a highway for him; the heavens built up as a canopy for him." "Every trait spoke predominate self-will; his smile was pleasing, though disdain too often curled his lips—lips which to female eyes were the very throne of beauty and love. . . . Thus full of contradictions, unbending

yet haughty, gentle yet fierce, tender and again neglectful, he by some strange art found easy entrance to the admiration and affection of women; now caressing and now tyrannising over them according to his mood, but in every change a despot."

A large part of the three volumes is taken up with a characterisation of Adrian and Lord Raymond, the latter of whom falls when fighting for the Greeks. How impossible it was for her to rid her mind of her own sorrow is shown at the end of the third volume, where Adrian is drowned, and Lionel Verney is left alone. He thus says of his friend:

"All I had possessed of this world's goods, of happiness, knowledge, or virtue—I owed to him. He had, in his person, his intellect, and rare qualities, given a glory to my life, which without him it had never known. Beyond all other beings he had taught me that goodness, pure and simple, can be an attribute of man."

Mrs. Shelley made the great mistake of writing this novel in the first person. *The Last Man*, who is telling the story, although he has the name of Lionel, is most assuredly of the female sex. The friendship between him and Adrian is not the friendship of man for man, but rather the love of man and woman.

Mrs. Shelley's next novel, *Lodore*, written in 1835, thirteen years after the death of her hus-

band, had a better outlined plot and more definite characters. But again it echoes the past. Lord Byron's unhappy married relations and Shelley's troubles with Harriet are blended in the story, Lord Byron furnishing the character in some respects of Lord Lodore, while his wife, Cornelia Santerre, resembles both Harriet and Lady Byron. Lady Santerre, the mother of Cornelia, augments the trouble between Lord and Lady Lodore, and, contrary to the evident intentions of the writer, the reader's sympathies are largely with Cornelia and Lady Santerre. When Lodore wishes Cornelia to go to America to save him from disgrace, Lady Santerre objects to her daughter's accompanying him:

"He will soon grow tired of playing the tragic hero on a stage surrounded by no spectators; he will discover the folly of his conduct; he will return, and plead for forgiveness, and feel that he is too fortunate in a wife who has preserved her own conduct free from censure and remark while he has made himself a laughing-stock to all."

These words strangely bring to mind Lord Byron as having evoked them.

Again Lady Lodore's letter to her husband at the time of his departure to America reminds one of Lady Byron:

"If heaven have blessings for the coldly egotistical, the unfeeling despot, may those

blessings be yours; but do not dare to interfere with emotions too pure, too disinterested for you ever to understand. Give me my child, and fear neither my interference nor resentment."

Lady Lodore's character changes in the book, and becomes more like that of Harriet Shelley. As Mrs. Shelley wrote, fragments of the past evidently came into her mind and influenced her pen, and her original conception of the characters was forgotten. Clorinda, the beautiful, eloquent, and passionate Neapolitan, was drawn from Emilia Viviani, who had suggested to Shelley his poem *Epipsychidion*, while both Horatio Saville, who had "no thought but for the nobler creations of the soul, and the discernment of the sublime laws of God and nature," and his cousin Villiers, also an enthusiastic worshipper of nature, possessed many of Shelley's qualities.

Besides two other novels of no value, *Perkin Warbeck* and *Falkner*, Mrs. Shelley wrote numerous short stories for the annuals, at that time so much in vogue. In 1891, these were collected and edited with an appreciative criticism by Sir Richard Garnett. Many of them have the intensity and sustained interest of Frankenstein.

After the death of her husband, grief and trouble dimmed Mrs. Shelley's imagination.

But the pale student Frankenstein, the monster he created, and the beautiful priestess, Beatrice, three strong conceptions, testify to the genius of Mary Shelley.

CHAPTER XIII

Mrs. Gore. Mrs. Bray

DURING the second decade of the nineteenth century, while Scott was writing some of the most powerful of the Waverley novels, a host of new writers sprang into popular notice. John Galt, William Harrison Ainsworth, and G. P. R. James began their endless series of historical romances, while in 1827, Bulwer Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli introduced to the reading public, as the representatives of fashionable society, *Falkland* and *Vivian Grey*. The decade was prolific also in novels by women. Jane Austen had died in 1817, but Maria Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, the Porters, Amelia Opie, Miss Ferrier, Mrs. Shelley and Miss Mitford were still writing; during this period, Mrs. S. C. Hall began her work in imitation of Miss Mitford, while Mrs. Gore and Mrs. Bray took up the goose-quill, piled reams of paper on their desks, and began their literary careers.

About a score of years before Thackeray tickled English society with pictures of its own

snobbery, Mrs. Gore, a young woman, wife of an officer in the Life Guards, saw through the many affectations of the polite world, and in a series of novels, pointed out its ludicrous pretences with lively wit. Mrs. Gore has suffered, however, from the multiplicity of her writings. During the years between 1823, when she wrote her first novel, *Theresa Marchmont*, and 1850, when, quite blind, she retired from the world of letters, she published two hundred volumes of novels, plays, and poems. Her plots are often hastily constructed, her men and women dimly outlined, but she is never dull. No writer since Congreve has so many sparkling lines. She has been likened to Horace, and if we compare her wit with that of Thackeray, who by the way ridiculed her in his *Novels by Eminent Hands*, her humour has qualities of old Falernian, beside which his too frequently has the bitter flavour of old English beer. The Englishman is inclined to take his wit, like his sports, too seriously, and to mingle with it a little of the spice of envy. Mrs. Gore has none of this, however, and skims along the surface of fashionable life with a grace and ease and humour extremely diverting.

Her writings are so voluminous that one can only make excerpts at random. One of the liveliest is *Cecil, or the Adventures of a Coxcomb*, a humorous satire on *Vivian Grey*. "The arch-

coxcomb of his coxcombical time" had become a coxcomb at the age of six months, when he first saw himself in the mirror, from which time his nurse stopped his crying by tossing him in front of a looking-glass. His curls made him so attractive that at six years of age he was admitted to his mother's boudoir, from which his red-headed brother was excluded, and he superseded the spaniel in her ladyship's carriage. With the loss of his curls went the loss of favour. He did not prosper at school, and was rusticated after a year's residence at Oxford. Here he formed an acquaintance which helped him much in the world of coxcombry. Though this man was not well born, he was an admitted leader among gentlemen. Cecil soon discovered that his high social position was due entirely to his impertinence, and he made this wise observation: "Impudence is the quality of a footman; impertinence of his master. Impudence is a thing to be rebutted with brute force; impertinence requires wit for the putting down." So he matched his wit with this man's impertinence, and they became sworn friends.

When Cecil went to London, he found that "people had supped full of horrors, during the Revolution, and were now devoted to elegiac measures. My languid smile and hazel eyes were the very thing to settle the business of the devoted beings left for execution." Of course

all the women fell desperately in love with him. "I had always a predisposition to woman-slaughter, with extenuating circumstances, as well as a stirring consciousness of the exterminating power," he explains to us. Like Childe Harold and Vivian Grey, this coxcomb soon became weary of London, and travelled through Europe in an indolent way, for after all it was his chief pleasure "to lie in an airy French bed, showered over with blue convolvulus," and read tender billets from the ladies. This book was an excellent antidote to the Byronic fever, then at its height.

In her *Sketches of English Character*, Mrs. Gore describes different men who were in her time to be met with in the social life of London. The Dining-Out Man thus speaks for himself:

"Ill-natured people fancy that the life of a dining-out man is a life of corn, wine, and oil; that all he has to do is to eat, drink and be merry. I only know that, had I been aware in the onset of life, of all I should have to go through in my vocation, I would have chosen some easier calling. I would have studied law, physic, or divinity."

In the sketches of *The Clubman*, she assigns John Bull's dislike of ladies' society as the reason for the many clubs in the English metropolis:

"While admitting woman to be a divinity,

he chooses to conceal his idol in the Holy of Holies of domestic life. Duly to enjoy the society of Mrs. Bull, he chooses a smoking tureen, and cod's head and shoulders to intervene between them, and their olive branches to be around their table. . . . For John adores woman in the singular, and hates her in the plural; John loves, but does not like. Woman is the object of his passion, rarely of his regard. There is nothing in the gaiety of heart or sprightliness of intellect of the weaker sex which he considers an addition to society. To him women are an interruption to business and pleasure."

Mrs. Gore could also unveil hypocrisy. In her novel *Preferment, or My Uncle the Earl*, she thus describes a worthy ornament of the church:

"The Dean of Darbington glided along his golden railroad—'mild as moonbeams'—soft as a swansdown muff—insinuating as a silken eared spaniel. His conciliating arguments were whispered in a tone suitable to the sick chamber of a nervous hypochondriac, and his strain of argument resembled its potations of thin, weak, well-sweetened barley water. While Dr. Macnab succeeded with *his* congregation by kicking and bullying them along the path of grace, Dr. Nicewig held out his finger with a coaxing air and gentle chirrup, like a bird-fancier decoying a canary."

A critic in the *Westminster Review* in 1831 thus writes of her:

"Mrs. Gore has a perfectly feminine knowledge of all the weaknesses and absurdities of an ordinary man of fashion, following the routine of London life in the season. She unmasks his selfishness with admirable acuteness; she exposes his unromantic egotism, with delightful sauciness. Her portraits of women are also executed with great spirit; but not with the same truth. In transferring men to her canvas, she has relied upon the faculty of observation, usually fine and vigilant in a woman; but when portraying her own sex, the authoress has perhaps looked within; and the study of the internal operations of the human machine is a far more complex affair, and requires far more extensive experience, and also different faculties, from those necessary to acquire a perfect knowledge of the appearances on the surface of humanity."

Notwithstanding Mrs. Gore touches so lightly on the surface of life, certain definite sociological and moral principles underlie her work. She is as democratic as Charlotte Smith, Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Mitford, or even William Godwin. She asserts again and again that men of inferior birth with the same opportunities of education may be as intellectual and refined as the sons of a "hundred earls." Those members of the

aristocracy who fail to recognise the true worth of intelligent men of plebeian origin are made very ridiculous. In her novel *Pin Money*, published in 1831, how very funny is Lady Derenzy's speech when she learns that a soap manufacturer is being fêted in fashionable society! Lady Derenzy, by the way, is the social lawgiver to her little coterie:

"It is now some years," said she, "since the independence of America, and the influence exerted in this country by the return of a large body of enlightened men, habituated to the demoralising spectacle of an equalisation of rank, was supposed to exert a pernicious influence on the minds of the secondary and inferior classes of Great Britain. At that critical moment I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order; and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Lord Derenzy took my advice, and the country was saved.

"Again, when the assemblage of the States General of France,—the fatal tocsin of the revolution,—spread consternation and horror throughout the higher ranks of every European country, and the very name of the guillotine operated like a spell on the British peerage, I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true

to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order; and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Again Lord Derenzy took my advice, and again the country was saved."

Mrs. Gore has so cleverly mingled the so-called self-made men and men of inherited rank in her books that one cannot distinguish between them. In *The Soldier of Lyons*, one of her early novels, which furnished Bulwer with the plot of his play *The Lady of Lyons*, the hero, a peasant by birth and a soldier of the Republic, enters into a marriage contract with the widow of a French marquis, in order to save her from the guillotine. This lady of high rank learns to respect her husband, and becomes the suitor for his love. In *The Heir of Selwood*, a former field marshal of Napoleon, a peasant, devotes his energies to improving the condition of the poor on the estate he had won by his services to his country, and at his death his tenants erected a column to his memory, bearing the inscription: "Most dear to God, to the king, and to the people."

Mrs. Gore constantly asserts that the only distinctions between men are based upon character and ability. She says of one of her characters, a poet:

"His footing in society is no longer dependent

upon the caprice of a drawing-room. It is the security of that intellectual power which forces the world to bend the knee. The poor, dreamy boy, self-taught, self-aided, had risen into power. He wields a pen. And the pen in our age weighs heavier in the social scale than a sword of a Norman baron."

Mrs. Gore lived at a time when the introduction of machinery and the establishment of large factories was producing a new type of man: men like Burtonshaw in *The Hamiltons:* "A practical, matter-of-fact individual, with plenty of money and plenty of intellect; the sort of human power-loom one would back to work wonders against a dawdling old spinning-jenny like Lord Tottenham."

A critic in the *Westminster Review* wrote in 1832 as follows:

"The wealthy merchant or money-dealer is represented, perhaps for the first time in fiction, as a man of true dignity, self-respect, education, and thorough integrity, agreeable in manners, refined in tastes, and content with, if not proud of, his position in society."

Mrs. Gore was called by her contemporaries the novelist of the new era.

She was also interested in the great ethical questions of life. She did not write of the love of youthful heroes and more youthful heroines. She often traced the consequences

of sin on character and destiny. In *The Heir of Selwood*, she is as stern a moralist in tracing the effects of vice as George Eliot. *The Banker's Wife*, the scene of which is laid among the merchants of London, is a serious study of the sorrows of a life devoted to outward show. The picture of the banker among his guests, whose wealth, unknown to them, he has squandered, reminds one of the days before the final overthrow of Dombey and Son.

Mrs. Gore was a woman of genius. With the stern principles of the puritan, and feelings as republican as the mountain-born Swiss, she was never controversial. She saw the absurdities of certain hollow pretensions of society, but her good-humoured raillery offended no one. If her two hundred volumes could be weeded of their verbiage by some devotee of literature, and reduced to ten or fifteen, they would be not only entertaining reading, but would throw strong lights upon the *élite* of London in the days when hair-oils, pomades, and strong perfumes were the distinguishing marks of the Quality.

Mrs. Gore owed her place in English letters to native wit and ability; Mrs. Bray owed hers to hard study and painstaking endeavour. She was one of the few women who followed the style of writing brought to perfection by Sir Walter Scott.

Mrs. Bray became imbued with the historic spirit early in life. Her first husband was Charles Stothard, the author of *Monumental Effigies of Great Britain*, with whom she travelled through Brittany, Normandy and Flanders. While he made careful drawings of the ruins of castles and abbeys, she read Froissart's *Chronicles*, visited the places which he has described, and traced out among the people any surviving customs which he has recorded.

Two novels were the result of these studies. *De Foix, or Sketches of the Manners and Customs of the Fourteenth Century*, is a story of Gaston Phoebus, Count de Foix, whose court Froissart visited, and of whom he wrote: "To speak briefly and truly, the Count de Foix was perfect in person and in mind; and no contemporary prince could be compared with him for sense, honour, or liberality." *The White Hoods*, a name by which the citizens of Ghent were denominated, is laid in the Netherlands, and tells of the conflict between the court and the citizens of Ghent, under Philip von Artaveld, during the reign of Charles the Fifth of France and the early kingship of Charles the Sixth. As in all her novels, the accuracy for which she strove in the most minute details retards the action of the plot, but adds to the historical value of these romances.

For the tragic romance of *The Talba, or Moor*

of Portugal, Mrs. Bray, as she had not visited the Spanish peninsula, depended upon her reading. The plot was suggested to her by a picture of Ines de Castro in the Royal Academy. It represented the gruesome coronation of the corpse of Ines de Castro, six years after her death. Thus did her husband, Don Pedro, show honour to his wife, who had been put to death while he, then a prince, was serving in the army of Portugal. The whole story is a fitting theme for tragedy, and was at one time dramatised by Mary Mitford. In order to give her mind the proper elevation for the impassioned scenes of this novel, it was Mrs. Bray's custom to read a chapter of Isaiah or Job each day before beginning to write.

After the death of her first husband, Mrs. Bray married the vicar of Tavistock, and for thirty-five years lived in the vicarage of that town. Here she became interested in the legends of Devon and Cornwall, and wrote five novels founded upon the history or tradition of those counties. *Henry de Pomeroy* opens at the abbey of Tavistock, one of the oldest abbeys in England, during the reign of Richard Cœur-de-Leon. The scene of *Fitz of Fitz-Ford* is also laid at Tavistock, but during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Another story of the reign of the Virgin Queen was *Warleigh, or the Fatal Oak: a Legend of Devon. Courtenay of Walreddon: a*

Romance of the West takes place in the reign of Charles the First, about the commencement of the Civil War. A gypsy girl, by name Cinderella Small, is introduced into the story, and has been highly praised. The character, as well as some of the stories told of her, was drawn from life.

But the most famous of these novels is *Trelawny of Trelawne; or the Prophecy: a Legend of Cornwall*, a story of the rebellion of Monmouth. Like most of the romances upon English themes, the private history of the family furnishes the romance, the historical happenings being used only for the setting: the usual method of Scott. The hero of this novel is Sir Jonathan Trelawny, one of the seven bishops who were committed to the Tower by James the Second. When he was arrested by the king's command, the Cornish men rose one and all, and marched as far as Exeter, in their way to extort his liberation. Trelawny is a popular hero of Cornwall, as the following lines testify:

A good sword and a trusty hand!
A merry heart and true!
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do!

And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here 's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!

Out spake their captain brave and bold,
A merry wight was he—
"If London Tower were Michael's hold,
We 'll set Trelawny free!"

We 'll cross the Tamar, land to land,
The Severn is no stay,
All side to side, and hand to hand,
And who shall say us nay?

And when we come to London Wall,
A pleasant sight to view,
Come forth! Come forth! Ye cowards all,
To better men than you!

Trelawny he 's in keep and hold—
Trelawny he may die,
But here 's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will know the reason why!

Like Scott, Mrs. Bray went about with note-book in hand, and noted the features of the landscape, the details of a ruin, or the furniture or armour of the period of which she was writing. It is this painstaking work, together with the fact that she had access to places and books that were then denied to the ordinary reader, and chose subjects and places not before treated in fiction, that gives permanent value to her writings. She also had the proper feeling for the past, and dignity and elevation of style. Sometimes an entire page of her romances

might be attributed to the pen of the "Mighty Wizard." Perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid her as an artist is that she resembles Scott when he is nodding.

CHAPTER XIV

Julia Pardoe. Mrs. Trollope. Harriet Martineau

SOMEWHERE between the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, the modern novel was born. The romances of the twenties are, for the most part, old-fashioned in tone, and speak of an earlier age; but in the thirties, the modern novel, with its exact reproduction of places, customs, and speech, and strong local flavour, was full-grown. Dickens, under the name of Boz, was contributing his sketches to *The Old Monthly Magazine* and the *Evening Chronicle*. Thackeray was beginning to contribute articles to *Fraser's Magazine*, established in 1830. Annuals and monthlies sprang up in the night, and paid large sums for long and short stories. The thirst for them was unquenchable. Many women were supporting themselves by writing tales which did not live beyond the year of their publication. Mrs. Marsh was writing stories of fashionable

life varied by historical romances. Mrs. Crowe wrote stories of fashionable life varied by supernatural romances and tales of adventure. In *The Story of Lilly Dawson*, published in 1847, the heroine was captured and brought up by smugglers, and the gradual development of her character was traced; thus giving to the story a psychological interest. Lady Blessington earned two thousand pounds a year for twenty years by novels and short stories of fashionable life. Lady Blessington had a European reputation as a court beauty and a brilliant and witty conversationalist. This with the coronet must have helped to sell her books. They do not contain even a sentence that holds the attention. A friend said of her, "Her genius lay in her tongue; her pen paralysed it." More enduring work in fiction was done by Julia Pardoe, Mrs. Trollope, and Harriet Martineau.

The novels of Julia Pardoe, like those of Mrs. Bray, owe their value, not to their intrinsic merit, but to the comparatively unknown places to which she introduces her readers. She accompanied her father, Major Pardoe, to Constantinople, where they were entertained by natives of high position, to whom they had letters of introduction, and Miss Pardoe was the guest of their wives in the harem. Her knowledge of the mode of life and habits of

thought of Turkish women is considered second only to that of Mary Wortley Montagu.

The material for her story *The Romance of the Harem* was obtained during her visits to these Turkish ladies. In this she has caught the languid, heavily perfumed atmosphere of the Orient. Besides the main plot, stories of adventure and love are related which beguiled the slowly passing hours of the inmates of the seraglio. Some of them might have been told by Schehezerhade, if she had wished to add to her entertainment of *The Thousand and One Nights.*

After Miss Pardoe's return to England, she wrote a series of fashionable novels, inferior to many of those of Mrs. Gore, and better than the best of those by Lady Blessington. *Confessions of a Pretty Woman, The Jealous Wife,* and *The Rival Beauties* were the most popular of these, although they have long since been forgotten.

In 1849, Miss Pardoe published a collection of stories under the title *Flies in Amber.* The title, she explains in the preface, was suggested by a belief of the Orientals that amber comes from the sea, and attracts about it all insects, which find in it both a prison and a posthumous existence. Some of the stories of this collection were gathered in her travels. *An Adventure in Bithynia, The Magyar and the*

Moslem, or an Hungarian Legend, and the *Yèrè-Batan-Seraï*, which means Swallowed-up Palace, the great subterranean ruin of Constantinople, have the interest which always attaches to tales gathered by travellers in unfrequented places.

Mrs. Frances Trollope, the mother of the more famous author Anthony Trollope, like Miss Pardoe, found material for stories in unfamiliar places. Mrs. Trollope had the nature of the pioneer. With her family, she sought our western lands of the Mississippi Valley, where the virgin forest had resounded to the axe of the first settler but a short time before. She wrote the first book of any note describing the manners of the Americans; the first strong novel calling attention to the evils of slavery in our Southern States; and the first one describing graphically the white slavery in the cotton-mills of Lancashire; and she is, perhaps, the only writer who began a long literary career at the age of fifty-two.

On the fourth of November, 1827, Mrs. Trollope with her three children sailed from London, and, after about seven weeks on the sea, arrived on Christmas Day at the mouth of the Mississippi. After a brief visit in New Orleans, this party of English travellers sailed up the river to Memphis, where, remote from the comforts of civilisation, they abode for a time under the

direction of Mrs. Wright, an English lecturer who had come to America for the avowed purpose of proving the perfect equality of the black and white races. But Mrs. Trollope and her family soon tired of life in the wilderness, and sought Cincinnati, at that time a small city of wooden houses, not over thirty years of age. After two years' residence in Cincinnati, she went by stage to Baltimore, visited Philadelphia and New York, and returned to England, after a sojourn of three and a half years in this country.

During her residence in the United States, she made copious notes of what she saw and heard. These she published the year after her return to England, under the title *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. At once the pens of all the critics were let loose upon the author. Her American critics declared that she knew nothing about them or their country; and their English friends refused to believe that the people of America had such shocking bad manners.

Mrs. Trollope reported truthfully what she saw and heard. But a frontier city is made up of people gathered from the four corners of the earth: each family is a law unto itself; so that the speeches Mrs. Trollope carefully set down, and the customs she depicted, were often peculiarities of individuals rather than of a community. But she has left a vivid picture of

American life in the twenties, less exaggerated than the picture Charles Dickens gave of it in the forties. Mrs. Trollope's attitude is no more hostile than his, but he is more entertaining. He held us up to ridicule and laughed at us; she seriously pointed out our errors in the hope that we might amend. She is slightly inconsistent at times, for, while asserting the equality of whites and blacks, she as bitterly resented the equality of white master and white servant. Her purpose in writing this book was to warn her own countrymen of the evils which must follow a government of the many.

Although she never takes the broad view, but always the narrow and partial one, her book gives a good picture of the everyday life and habits of thought of the next generation to that which had fought and won the American Revolution. The white heat of republican fervour, so obnoxious to a European, welded the nation together as one people, and filled their hearts with a religious reverence for the constitution. She meant them as a reproach, but we read these words with pride: "I never heard from anyone a single disparaging word against their government."

Mrs. Trollope has been described by her friends as a refined woman of charming personality. But as soon as she began to write, she donned her armour and proclaimed her hos-

tility either to her hero or to the larger part of the characters of the book. This method is dangerous to art. Even the genius of Thackeray is lessened by his lack of sympathy.

In 1833 Mrs. Trollope published her first novel, *The Refugee in America*. It is the story of an English lord who has fled to America to escape English justice. He and his friends have settled in Rochester, New York. It was written for the sole purpose of describing the manners of the people of our Eastern cities. The author's attitude toward them is well illustrated by a conversation between Caroline, the young English girl, and her American *protégée*, Emily. After a dinner in Washington, Caroline exclaims to her friend:

" 'Oh, my own Emily, you must not live and die where such things be.'

"Emily sighed as she answered, 'I am born to it, Miss Gordon.'

" 'But hardly bred to it. We have caught you young, and we have spoiled you for ever as an American lady.' "

Three years later Mrs. Trollope published her strongest novel, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*. This is a powerful picture of early life on the Mississippi; it was the first novel since Mrs. Behn's *Oroonoko* which called attention to the evils of African slavery. It is marred, however, by want of sympathy

with the community she is describing. Mr. Jonathan Whitlaw Senior has "squat in the bush," an expression to which Mrs. Trollope objects, but which brings to mind at once the log cabin in the forest clearing, and the muscular, uncouth pioneer. Jonathan furnishes firewood to the Mississippi steamers, and by this means gains sufficient wealth to carry out his life's ambition: to set up a store in Natchez, and to own "niggers." But the life of a pioneer has made Jonathan as cunning as a fox. This cunning his son Jonathan, the hero of the story, has inherited to the full. As a slave-owner he is as grasping and cruel as Legree, whom Mrs. Stowe immortalised some years later. His character, though drawn with strength and vigour, is inconsistent. He is a miser, yet he is a gambler and a spendthrift, qualities not often found together. He is not a true representative of the son of a pioneer. Clio Whitlaw, the aunt of the hero, belongs more truly to her environment. One suspects the English family at Cincinnati had received neighbourly kindnesses from women like her. With her physical strength and great courage she is kind and neighbourly to all who need her help. The sad story of Edward Bligh, the young Kentuckian who preached the gospel to the slaves, the victim of lynch law, a word dreaded even then, is as thrilling as parts of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Besides *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, Mrs. Trollope created two other characters that will cause her name to live as long as those of William Harrison Ainsworth or G. P. R. James. The coarse scheming widow Barnaby is the heroine of three novels, *Widow Barnaby*, *The Widow Married*, and *The Widow Wedded, or the Barnabys in America*. In the last book Mrs. Trollope somewhat humorously pays off her scores against her American critics, who had dubbed her a cockney, unfamiliar with good society in either England or America. The Widow Barnaby, who has come to New Orleans with her husband after his little gambling ways have made residence in London unpleasant, decides to earn some money by writing a book on America. She describes the Americans, not as they are, but as they think they are. She listens to all their boasts about themselves and country, and puts it faithfully in her book. Of course they like it and she becomes the literary lion of America.

Anthony Trollope, in his book *An Autobiography*, said of his mother's books on America: "Her volumes were very bitter; but they were very clever, and they saved the family from ruin." She is also given the credit of having improved the manners of American society. Whenever a "gentleman" at his club put his feet on the table, or indulged in any liberty of

which she would not have approved, others cried, "Trollope! Trollope! Trollope!"

The *Vicar of Wrexhill*, the scene of which is laid in England, is an attack on the evangelical clergy in the Episcopal Church. The vicar is no truer to the great body of evangelical preachers than Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw is true to the great body of slave-owners. There is the same exaggeration to prove a theory. Evangelical preaching is harmful, is the theorem, and a man is selected to prove it who in any walk of life would be a hypocrite and libertine. The book has many interesting situations. The vicar's proposal to the rich widow, one of his parishioners, is clever: "Let me henceforth be as the shield and buckler that shall guard thee; so that thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day." And he promises, if she will marry him, to lead her "sinful children into the life everlasting." No other book has shown, as this does, the powerful effect upon sensitive natures of this kind of preaching. One feels that the followers of the Reverend Vicar were under the influence of hypnotic suggestion, and that their awakening from this spell was like the awakening from a trance.

Mrs. Trollope was actuated by humanitarian motives. This was not as usual then as since Dickens popularised the humanitarian novel.

Only three years after he wrote *Sketches by Boz*, Mrs. Trollope wrote *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong*, the story of a boy employed in the mills of Lancashire. Negro slavery in the South, even as Mrs. Trollope saw it, was a happy state of existence compared with child slavery in the mills of Ashleigh and Deep Valley, Lancashire, where the children were driven to work by the lash in the morning, and were crippled by the "Billy roller," the name of the stick by which they were beaten for inattention to their work during the day. If the truth of these horrors were not attested by other writers of this time, one would doubt the possibility of their existence in the same land and at the same time in which Wordsworth was writing of the beauties of his own childhood, where the river Derwent mingled its murmurs with his nurse's song.

Mrs. Trollope assailed injustice with a powerful pen. Woman's moral nature is truer and more sensitive than man's. Even if her sympathies cloud her judgment, it is better than that her judgment should reason away her sympathies. Neither has woman in her philanthropy contented herself with broad principles which would help all and therefore reach none. The dusky slave in the cotton-fields, the pale-faced child in the cotton-mills, have alike touched the hearts of women, who by their pens

have been able to awaken the conscience of a nation. The horror of child labour wrung from Mrs. Browning the heart-felt poem, *The Cry of the Children*. The four strong novels proclaiming the tyranny of the whites over the blacks, *Oronooko*, *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *The Hour and the Man*, were written by women.

The name of Harriet Martineau was a familiar one in every household during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign. Like Mrs. Trollope she was a woman of fearless honesty. But Harriet Martineau was never the *raconteur*, she was first the educator. She wrote story after story to teach lessons in political and social science. Her method of work, as set forth in her autobiography, was peculiar, and the result is not uninteresting. In her *Political Economy Tales*, she selected certain principles which she wished to set forth, and embodied each principle in a character. The operations of these principles furnished the plot of the story. Besides the illustrations of the principles by the characters, the laws were discussed in conversation, and thus the lesson was taught. In the story *Brooke and Brooke Farm*, she made use of an expression which Ruskin almost paraphrased: "The whole nation, the whole world, is obliged to him who makes corn grow where it never grew

before; and yet more to him who makes two ears ripen where only one ripened before." In the tale *A Manchester Strike*, factory life and the problems that face the working men are set forth, the aim being to show that work and wages depend upon the great laws of supply and demand.

Miss Martineau wrote two novels. *Deerbrook*, in 1839, was modelled on *Our Village*. The village doctor, Mr. Hope, is the central figure. Firm in his convictions, he loses the favour of the leading families, and through their influence he is deprived of his practice. A fever, however, sweeps over the place and his former enemies beg, not in vain, for his skilful services. A double love story runs through the book. Mrs. Rowland, a scheming woman, is the most cleverly drawn of the characters, and was evidently suggested by some of Miss Edgeworth's fashionable ladies.

Harriet Martineau also visited America, but some years later than Mrs. Trollope, when the slavery agitation was at its height. As she had written upon the evils of slavery before she left England, she was invited to attend a meeting of the Abolitionists in Boston. She accepted this invitation, and expressed there her abhorrence of slavery. After this she received letters from some of the citizens of the pro-slavery States, threatening her life if she entered

their domain. This naturally threw her entirely with the Abolition party, and she wrote many articles to help their cause.

Miss Martineau's second novel, *The Hour and the Man*, grew out of her sympathy and belief in the coloured race. Toussaint de L'Ouverture, the devoted slave, soldier, liberator, and martyr, is the hero. Every scene in which this wonderful black figures is vividly written. Many of the minor incidents are but slightly sketched, and many of the minor characters elude the reader's grasp. How far this book is a truthful portrayal of the negro cannot be judged unti the "race problem" is surveyed with unprejudiced eyes. Then and not until then will its place in literature be assigned. She gives the same characterisation of this hero of St. Domingo as does Wendell Phillips in his wonderful speech of which the following is the peroration:

"But fifty years hence, when Truth gets a hearing, the Muse of History will put Phocian for the Greek, Brutus for the Roman, Hampden for England, Fayette for France, choose Washington as the bright, consummate flower of our earlier civilisation, then, dipping her pen in the sunlight, will write in the clear blue, above them all, the name of the soldier, the statesman, the martyr, TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE."

The Hour and the Man was published in 1840, and was warmly received by the Aboli-

tionists. William Lloyd Garrison, after reading it, wrote the following sonnet to the author:

England! I grant that thou dost justly boast
Of splendid geniuses beyond compare;
Men great and gallant,—women good and fair,—
Skilled in all arts, and filling every post
Of learning, science, fame,—a mighty host!
Poets divine, and benefactors rare,—
Statesmen,—philosophers,—and they who dare
Boldly to explore heaven's vast and boundless coast,
To one alone I dedicate this rhyme,
Whose virtues with a starry lustre glow,
Whose heart is large, whose spirit is sublime,
The friend of liberty, of wrong the Foe:
Long be inscribed upon the roll of time
The name, the worth, the works of HARRIET MARTINEAU.

Miss Martineau wrote on a variety of subjects, and generally held a view contrary to the accepted one. She wrote upon mesmerism, positivism, atheism, which she professed, and after each book warriors armed with pens sprang up to assail the author. But she had many friends, even among those who were most bitter against her doctrines. One wrote of her, "There is the fine, honest, solid, North-country element in her." R. Brimley Johnson in *English Prose*, edited by Craik in 1896, said of her writings:

"Her gift to literature was for her own generation. She is the exponent of the infant century in many branches of thought:—its eager and

sanguine philanthropy, its awakening interest in history and science, its rigid and prosaic philosophy. But her genuine humanity and real moral earnestness give a value to her more personal utterances, which do not lose their charm with the lapse of time."

Harriet Martineau's name and personality will be remembered in history after her books have been forgotten.

CHAPTER XV

The Brontës

DURING the middle of the nineteenth century, English fiction largely depicted manners and customs of different classes and different parts of England. While Dickens, Thackeray, Disraeli, and Mrs. Gaskell were writing realistic novels, romantic fiction found noble exponents in the Brontë sisters.

The quiet life lived by the Brontës in the vicarage on the edge of the village of Haworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire seems prosaic to the casual observer, but it had many weird elements of romanticism. The purple moors stretching away behind the grey stone vicarage, the grey sky, and the sun always half-frowning, and never sporting with nature here as it does over the mountains in Westmoreland, make thought earnest and deep, and suggest the mystery which surrounds human life. It is a serious country, that of the Wharf valley; the people are a serious people, silent and observant. The Brontës were a direct outcome of this

country and people, only in them their severity and silence were kindled into life by a Celtic imagination.

What a group of people lived within those grey stone walls! As the vicar and his four motherless children gathered about their simple board, while they engaged in conversation with each other or with the curate, what scenes would have been enacted in that quiet room if the fancies teeming in each childish brain could have been suddenly endowed with life! How could even a dull curate, with an undercurrent of addition and subtraction running in his brain, based upon his meagre salary and economical expenditures, have been insensible to the thought with which the very atmosphere must have been surcharged? The brother, Patrick Branwell, found his audience in the public house, and delighted it with his wit and conversation. The sisters, after their household tasks were done, wrote their stories and often read them to each other.

But fate had chosen her darkest hues in which to weave the warp and woof of their lives. The wild dissipations and wilder talk of their brother Branwell clouded the imaginations of his sisters, and in a short time death was a constant presence in their midst. In September, 1848, Branwell died at the age of thirty; in less than three months, Emily died at the age of twenty-nine;

and in five months, Anne died at the age of twenty-seven; and Charlotte, the eldest, was left alone with her father. During the remaining six years of her life, her compensation for her loss of companionship was her writing. Not long after the death of her sisters, Mr. Nicholls proposed to her; was refused; proposed again and was accepted; then came the separation caused by Mr. Brontë's hostility to the marriage; then the marriage in the church under whose pavement so many members of her family were buried, grim attendants of her wedding; then the nine short months of married life; then the death of the last of the Brontë sisters at the age of thirty-nine. Mr. Brontë outlived her only six years, but he was the last of his family. Six children had been born to Patrick Brontë, not one survived him. Forty years had eliminated a family which yet lives through the imaginative powers of the three daughters who reached years of maturity.

Of the three sisters, the least is known of Emily, and her one novel, *Wuthering Heights*, reveals nothing of herself. Not one of the characters thought or felt as did the quiet, retiring author. Yet so great was her dramatic power that her brother Branwell was credited with the book, as it was deemed impossible for a woman to have conceived the character of Heathcliff. And yet this arch-fiend of litera-

ture was created by the daughter of a country vicar, whose only journeys from home had been to schools, either as pupil or governess. Charlotte Brontë has thrown but little light upon her sister's character. She says that she loved animals and the moors, but was cold toward people and repelled any attempt to win her confidence. The author of *Jane Eyre* seems neither to have understood Emily's nature nor her genius. Yet we are told that Emily was constantly seen with her arms around the gentle Anne, and that they were inseparable companions. If Anne Brontë could have lived longer, she would have thrown much light upon the character of the author of *Wuthering Heights*. But now, as we read of her brief life and her one novel, she seems to belong to the great dramatists rather than to the novelists, to the poets who live apart from the world and commune only with the people of their own creating.

Wuthering Heights stands alone in the history of prose fiction. It belongs to the wild region of romanticism, but it imitates no book, and has never been copied. No incident, no character, no description, can be traced to the influence of any other book, but the atmosphere is that of the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Charlotte Brontë thus speaks of it in a letter to a friend:

"*Wuthering Heights* was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials. The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor; gazing thereon, he saw how from the crag might be elicited a head, savage, swart, sinister: a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur—power. He wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations. With time and labour, the crag took human shape, and there it stands, colossal, dark and frowning, half statue, half rock, in the former sense, terrible and goblin-like; in the latter, almost beautiful, for its colouring is of mellow grey, and moorland moss clothes it, and heath, with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, grows faithfully close to the giant's foot."

All of this is true, but it gives only the general outlines, nothing of the inner meaning.

In all literature, there is not so repulsive a villain as Heathcliff, the offspring of the gipsies. Insensible to kindness, but resentful of wrong; hard, scheming, indomitable in resolution; quick to put off the avenging of an injury until he can make his revenge serve his purpose; the personification of strength and power; he is yet capable of a love stronger than his hate. Heathcliff is so repulsive that he does not attract, and drawn with such skill that, as has been said, he has not been imitated.

But the strong, dark picture of Heathcliff makes us forget that Catharine is the centre of the story. The night that Mr. Lockwood spends at Wuthering Heights he reads her books, and her spirit appears to him crying for entrance at the window, and complaining that she has wandered on the moors for twenty years. While living, she represents a human soul balanced between heaven and hell, loved by both the powers of darkness and of light. But in her earliest years, she had loved Heathcliff; their thoughts, their affections were intertwined, and they were welded, as it were, into one soul, not at first by love, but by their common hatred of Hindley Earnshaw. When Catharine meets Edgar Linton, her finer nature asserts itself. She loves him as a being from another world; he gives her the first glimpse of real goodness, kindness, and gentleness. She catches through him a gleam of Paradise. But she knows how transient this is, and says to her old nurse, Nelly Dean:

"I 've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I should n't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; and that, not because he's handsome, no, Nelly, but because he 's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine

are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."

But Catharine is married to Edgar, and for three years her better nature triumphs. Heathcliff is away; Edgar Linton loves her truly, and their home is happy. Catharine alone knows that that house is not her true place of abode. She alone knows that Edgar has not touched her inner nature. She knows that her real self, the self that must abide through the centuries, is indissolubly linked with another's. And when Heathcliff returns, the intensity of her joy, her almost unearthly delight, she neither can nor attempts to conceal. Not once is she deceived as to his true nature. She knows the depth of his depravity, and thus warns the girl who has fallen in love with him:

"He 's not a rough diamond—a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic;—he 's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him, let this or that enemy alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them,—I say, let them alone, because I should hate them to be wronged: and he 'd crush you, like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge."

But Catharine's nature is akin to his, and it is with almost brutal delight that she helps forward this marriage, when she finds the girl does not trust her word.

Then comes the strife between Edgar and Heathcliff for the soul, so it seems, of Catharine. There is no jealousy on Edgar's part. The book never stoops to anything so earthly. Edgar loathes Heathcliff and cannot understand Catharine's affection for her early playmate. Although she never for a moment hesitates in her allegiance to Heathcliff, it is this strife that causes her death. The strife between good and evil wears her out.

Even after her death, her soul cannot leave this earth. It is still joined to Heathcliff's. It resembles here the story of Paola and Francesca. Catharine is waiting for him and his only delight is in her haunting presence. Heathcliff cannot be accused of keeping Catharine from Paradise. In life she would not let him from her presence, and she clings to him now. It is the story of *Undine* reversed. Undine gained a soul through a mortal's love. And we feel toward the close that Catharine, selfish and passionate as she was, is yet Heathcliff's better spirit. Catharine while living had prevented Heathcliff from killing her brother. Although he loved Catharine better than himself, and would have made any sacrifice at her request, he feels no more tenderness for her offspring than for his own. But the spirit of Catharine lived in her child and nephew, and when they looked at him with her eyes, he had

no pleasure in his revenge upon the son of Hindley nor on the daughter of Edgar Linton.

In the tenderness that once or twice comes over Heathcliff as he looks at Hareton Earnshaw, there is a ray of promise that he may be redeemed. And in the final outcome of the story, one can but hope that Catharine's restless spirit, as it watches and waits for Heathcliff, is striving to bring some blessing upon her house. The awakening of a better nature in Hareton, through his love for Catharine's daughter, is a pretty, tender idyl. The book is like a Greek tragedy in this, that at the close the atmosphere has been purged; the sun once more shines through the windows of Wuthering Heights; hatred is dead, and love reigns supreme.

Wuthering Heights is a novel not of externals, not of character, but of something deeper, more vital. The love of Catharine and Heathcliff has no physical basis; it is the union of souls evil, but not material. It is the sex of spirit, not of body, that adds its might to the resistless force that unites these two. Notwithstanding the external pictures are so distinct that a painter could transfer them to his canvas, the book is a soul-tragedy.

Wuthering Heights cannot be classed among the so-called popular novels. It has appealed to the poets rather than to the readers of fiction. It has received the warmest praise from the

poet Swinburne. In *The Athenæum* of June 16, 1883, he thus eulogises it:

"Now in *Wuthering Heights* this one thing needful ['logical and moral certitude'] is as perfectly and triumphantly attained as in *King Lear* or *The Duchess of Malfi*, in *The Bride of Lammermoor* or *Notre-Dame de Paris*. From the first we breathe the fresh dark air of tragic passion and presage; and to the last the changing wind and flying sunlight are in keeping with the stormy promise of the dawn. There is no monotony, there is no repetition, but there is no discord. This is the first and last necessity, the foundation of all labour and the crown of all success, for a poem worthy of the name; and this it is that distinguishes the hand of Emily from the hand of Charlotte Brontë. All the works of the elder sister are rich in poetic spirit, poetic feeling, and poetic detail; but the younger sister's work is essentially and definitely a poem in the fullest and most positive sense of the term."

At the close of this essay he writes:

"It may be true that not many will ever take it to their hearts; it is certain that those who do like it will like nothing very much better in the whole world of poetry or prose."

All that we know of Emily Brontë's nature is consistent, such as we would expect of the author of *Wuthering Heights*. The first stanza

of her last poem, written but a short time before her death, reveals her strength of will and faith:

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

These lines evoked the following tribute from Matthew Arnold:

——she
(How shall I sing her?) whose soul
Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died,
That world-famed son of fire—she, who sank
Baffled, unknown, self-consumed;
Whose too bold dying song
Stirr'd, like a clarion-blast, my soul.

The great books of prose fiction have been for the most part the work of mature years. The lyric poets burst into rhapsody at the dawn of life; but the powers of the novelist have ripened more slowly. The novelists have done better work after thirty-five than at an earlier age but few of them have written a classic at the age of twenty-eight, as did Emily Brontë.

Anne Brontë's fame has been both augmented and dimmed by the greater genius of her two sisters. She is remembered principally as one

of the Brontës, so that her books have been oftener reprinted and more extensively read than their actual merit would warrant. In comparison with the greater genius of Charlotte and Emily, her writings have been declared void of interest, and without any ray of the brilliancy which distinguishes their books. This latter statement is not true. Anne Brontë did not have their imaginative power, but she reproduced what she had seen and learned of life with conscientious devotion to truth. *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, Anne Brontë's first book, were published together in three volumes so as to meet the popular demand that novels, like the graces, should appear in threes. It is a photographic representation of the life of a governess in England during the forties. Agnes's courage in determining to augment the family income by seeking a position as governess; the high hopes with which she enters upon her first position; her conscientious resolve to do her full Christian duty to the spoiled children of the Bloomfields; her dismissal and sad return home; her second position in the family of Mr. Murray, a country squire; the two daughters, one determined to make a fine match for herself, the other a perfect hoyden without a thought beyond the horses and dogs; the disregard of the truth in both; Mr. Hatfield, the minister, who cared

only for the county families among his parishioners; Miss Murray's marriage for position and the unhappiness that followed it—form a series of photographs, which only a sensitive, responsive nature could have produced. The contrast between the gentle, refined governess, and the coarse natures upon whom she is dependent, is well shown, although there is no attempt on the part of the author to assert any superiority of one over the other. We have many books in which the shrinking governess is described from the point of view of the family or one of their guests, but here the governess of an English fox-hunting squire has spoken for herself; she has described her trials and the constant self-sacrifice which is demanded of her without bitterness, and in a kindly spirit withal, and for that reason the book is a valuable addition to the history of the life and manners of the century.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, her second novel, was a peculiar book to have shaped itself in the brain of the gentle youngest daughter of the Vicar of Haworth. But Anne Brontë had seen phases of life which must have sorely wounded her pure spirit. She had been governess at Thorp Green, where her brother Branwell was tutor, and where he formed that unfortunate attachment for the wife of his employer, which, with the help of liquor and opium, deranged his mind. Anne wrote in her diary at this time, "I have

had some very unpleasant and undreamt-of experience of human nature." As we picture Anne Brontē, with her light brown hair, violet-blue eyes, shaded by pencilled eyebrows, and transparent complexion, she seems a spirit of goodness and purity made to behold daily a depth of evil in the nature of one dear to her, which fills her with wonderment and horror.

Mr. Huntingdon of Wildfell Hall was drawn from personal observation of her brother. She wrote with minuteness, because she believed it her duty to hold up his life as a warning to others. The gradual change in Mr. Huntingdon from the happy confident lover to the ruined debauchee is well traced; the story of his infatuation for the wife of his friend, so reckless that he attempted no concealment, is realistic in the extreme. But what a change in the novel! A hundred years before, Huntingdon would have made a fine hero of romance, but here he is disgraced to the position of chief villain, and the reader feels for him only pity and loathing. Probably a man's pen would have touched his errors more lightly, but Anne Brontē painted him as he appeared to her. The author attributes such a character as Huntingdon's to false education, and makes her heroine say:

"As for my son—if I thought he would grow up to be what you call a man of the world,—one

that has 'seen life,' and glories in his experience, even though he should so far profit by it as to sober down, at length, into a useful and respected member of society—I would rather that he died to-morrow—rather a thousand times."

Notwithstanding its defects—and it is full of them judged from the stand-point of art—*Wildfell Hall* is a book of promise. In the descriptions of the Hall, the mystery that surrounds its mistress, the rumours of her unknown lover, the heathclad hills and the desolate fields, there are romantic elements that remind one of *Wuthering Heights*. The book is more faulty than *Agnes Grey*, but the writer had a deeper vision of life with its weaknesses and its depths of human passion. If years had mellowed that "undreamt-of experience" of Thorp Green, Anne Brontë with her truthful observation and sympathetic insight into character might have written a classic. The material out of which *Wildfell Hall* was wrought, under a more mature mind, with a better grasp of the whole and a better regard for proportion, would have made a novel worthy of a place beside *Jane Eyre*.

That English fiction has produced sweeter and more varied fruit by being grafted with the novels of women no one who gives the matter a serious thought can for a moment doubt.

One distinctive phase of woman's mind made its way but slowly in the English novel. Women are by nature introspective. They read character and are quick to grasp the motives and passions that underlie action. The French women have again and again embodied this view of human nature in their novels, which are essentially of the inner life. *The Princess of Clèves* by Madame de Lafayette, written in 1678, is the first book in which all the conflicts are those of the emotions; here the great triumph is that which a woman wins over her own heart. Madame de Tencin in *Mémoires du Comte de Comminges* represents her hero and heroine under the influence of two great passions, religion and love. Madame de Souza, Madame Cottin, Madame de Genlis, Madame de Staël, and George Sand wrote novels of the inner life. The Princess of Clèves with noble dignity controls her emotion and at last conquers it. The pages of George Sand thrill with unbridled passion.

The English women, however, are more repressed by nature than the French, and the English novel of the inner life advanced but slowly. The emotions of the long-forgotten Sidney Biddulph are minutely told. *A Simple Story* by Mrs. Inchbald is a psychological novel. Amelia Opie, Mary Brunton, and Mrs. Shelley wrote novels of the inner life.

But *Jane Eyre* is the first English novel which in sustained intensity of emotion can compare with the novels of Madame de Staël or George Sand. The style partakes of the high-wrought character of the heroine, and the reader is whirled along in the vortex of feeling until he too partakes of every varied mood of the characters, and closes the book fevered and exhausted. It is one of the ironies of fate that Charlotte Brontë with her strong pro-Anglican prejudices should belong to the school of these French women. But there is the same difference between their writings that there is between the French temperament and the English. Even in the wildest moments of Jane Eyre her passion is rather like the river Wharf when it has overflowed its banks; while theirs is like the mountain torrent that bears all down before it.

Much of the passion that Charlotte Brontë describes is pure imagination. She wrote freely to her friends about herself and the people whom she knew. The three rejected suitors caused her only a little amusement. Her love for Mr. Nicholls, whom she afterwards married, was little warmer than respect. We could as easily weave a romance out of Jane Austen's remark that the poet Crabbe was a man whom she could marry as to make a love story out of Charlotte's relations to Monseiur Héger, who figures as the hero in three of her books. Here she is greater

than the French women writers: they knew by experience what they wrote; she by innate genius.

Perhaps no novelist ever had more meagre materials out of which to make four novels than had Charlotte Brontē: her sisters, Monsieur and Madame Héger, the curates, and herself; a small village in Yorkshire, two boarding schools, two positions as governess, and a short time spent in a school in Brussels. Compare this range with the material that Scott, Dickens, or Thackeray had—then judge how much of the elixir of genius was given to each.

The early pages of *Jane Eyre*, the first novel which Charlotte Brontē published, describe Lowood Institution, a place modelled upon Cowan's Bridge School. The two teachers, the kind Miss Temple and the cruel Miss Scatcherd, were drawn from two instructors there at the time the Brontēs attended it. Helen Burns, so untidy but so meek in spirit, was Maria Brontē, the eldest sister, who died at the age of eleven, probably as a result of the poor food and harsh treatment of the school. With what calm she replies to Jane, when she would sympathise with her for an unjust punishment:

"I am, as Miss Scatcherd said, slatternly; I seldom put, and never keep, things in order; I am careless; I forget rules; I read when I should learn my lessons; I have no method; and

sometimes I say, like you, I cannot bear to be subjected to systematic arrangements. This is all very provoking to Miss Scatcherd, who is naturally neat, punctual, and particular."

Helen Burns, with her calm submission, and Jane Eyre, with her rebellious spirit, are finely contrasted. Jane's passionate resentment of the punishments which Miss Scatcherd inflicted on Helen was genuine. Charlotte was nine years old when she left Cowan's Bridge School, but her suppressed anger at the punishments which her sister Maria had received there flashed out years afterwards in *Jane Eyre*.

Charlotte Brontē was writing *Jane Eyre* at the same time that Emily and Anne were writing *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. As they read from their manuscripts, Charlotte objected to beauty as a requisite of a heroine, and said, "I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours." So arose the conception of Jane Eyre. If the slight, shy, Yorkshire governess, without beauty or charm of manner, had appeared before the imagination of any novelist either male or female, at that time, and asked to be admitted into the house of fiction, she would have been refused entrance as cruelly as Hannah shut the door in the face of Jane Eyre, when she came to her dripping with the rain, cold and weak from two nights' exposure on the

moor, and asking for charity. But Charlotte Brontë, with a woman's sympathetic eye made doubly penetrating and loving by genius, chose this outcast from romance as a heroine, a woman without beauty or charm, and boldly proclaimed that moral beauty was superior to physical beauty, and that the attraction of one soul for another lay quite beyond the pale of external form.

Jane Eyre is not, however, Charlotte Brontë, as has been so often asserted. She would not have gone back to comfort Mr. Rochester, after she had once left the Hall. One suspects that he was drawn from reading, since the author hardly trusted her knowledge of worldly men to draw a fitting lover for Jane. Mr. Rochester is very much the same type of man as Mr. B., whom Pamela married, and the independent Jane addresses him as "My Master," an expression constantly on the lips of Pamela. Yet Rochester leaves a permanent impression on the mind, for he represents a strong man at war with destiny. He conceals his marriage because of his determination to conquer fate. It is pointed out by critics to-day that he is quite an impossible character, that he is, in fact, a woman's hero. It is well to remember, however, that the author of *Jane Eyre* was believed at first to have been a man, as it was thought impossible for a man like Rochester to have

been conceived in a woman's brain, and not until Mrs. Gaskell's life of the Brontës was published was Charlotte's character as a modest woman established. But men have repudiated Mr. Rochester, and so we must accept their judgment.

The heroine of her next novel, *Shirley*, was suggested by Emily Brontë. Only Shirley was not Emily. Shirley could not have conceived even the dim outlines of *Wuthering Heights*, but she had many of the strong qualities of Emily, and these, mingled with the softer stuff of her own nature, make her contradictory but charming, and Louis Moore, an agreeable tutor whom Emily Brontë would have quite despised, naturally falls in love with his wayward pupil, as they pore over books in the school-room. Shirley is contrasted with Caroline Helstone, of whom Mrs. Humphry Ward says: "For delicacy, poetry, divination, charm, Caroline stands supreme among the women of Miss Brontë's gallery." Even if other admirers of Miss Brontë deny her this eminence, she certainly possesses all the qualities, rare among heroines, which Mrs. Ward has attributed to her.

In many of the conversations between Shirley and Caroline, there are reminders of what passed between the Brontë sisters in their own home. The relative excellence of men and women novelists always interested them. Shirley

evidently expressed Charlotte's own views in the following words:

"If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women. They do not read them in a true light; they misapprehend them, both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend. Then to hear them fall into ecstasies with each other's creations, worshipping the heroine of such a poem—novel—drama, thinking it fine,—divine! Fine and divine it may be, but often quite artificial—false as the rose in my best bonnet there. If I spoke all I think on this point, if I gave my real opinion of some first-rate female characters in first-rate works, where should I be? Dead under a cairn of avenging stones in half-an-hour."

"After all," says Caroline, "authors' heroines are almost as good as authoresses' heroes."

"Not at all," Shirley replies. "Women read men more truly than men read women. I 'll prove that in a magazine article some day when I 've time; only it will never be inserted; it will be 'declined with thanks,' and left for me at the publisher's."

The greater part of the men in *Shirley* were drawn from life, and are as true to their sex as were the heroines of Dickens, Thackeray, or

Disraeli, who were then writing. As for the curates, they are perfect. No man's hand could have executed their portraits so skilfully. They have no more real use in the story than they seem to have had in their respective parishes. But this daughter of a country vicar, who knew nothing of the London cockney, who was then enlivening the books of Dickens, seized upon the funniest people she knew, the curates, and they have been immortalised.

There is often in Charlotte Brontë's novels a separation of plot and character, as if they formed themselves independently in her mind. This is especially true of *Shirley*. At that time the attention of England was directed toward the manufacturing towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Mrs. Trollope and Harriet Martineau had written upon conditions of life there. In *Sybil* Disraeli considered broadly the underlying causes of the misery of the operatives. Mrs. Gaskell wrote *Mary Barton*, a story of Manchester life, the same year that Charlotte Brontë was writing *Shirley*. The plot of the last named is laid in the early years of the nineteenth century, and turns upon the opposition of the workmen to the introduction of machinery. But the plot and characters are constantly getting in each other's way and tripping each other up. Though the book is full of defects, one cannot judge it harshly. When

she began the funny description of the curates' tea-drinking, her brother and sisters were with her. Before it was finished, she and her father were left alone. But at this time the public demanded melodrama. Fires, drownings, and death-beds were popular methods of untying hard knots and of playing upon the emotions of the reader. She, like Mrs. Gaskell, constantly resorts to outside circumstances to help put things to rights when they are drifting in the wrong direction, circumstances which Jane Austen would not have admitted in a book of hers.

Before Charlotte Brontē wrote *Jane Eyre* or *Shirley*, she had finished *The Professor*, and offered it to different publishers, but it was rejected by all. Finally she herself lost faith in it, and transformed it into the beautiful story of *Villette*, where the school of Madame and Monseiur Héger in Brussels is made immortal. In the plot of *Villette*, as in the plot of *Jane Eyre* and of *Shirley*, many extraneous events happen which are either unexpected or unnecessary. Like *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* is steeped in the romantic spirit, but the hard light of reason again dispels the illusion. In the management of the supernatural Charlotte is far inferior to Emily. The explanation of the nun in *Villette* is even childish. It is the mistake made by Mrs. Radcliffe, by nearly all writers

of the age of reason. They give a ray, as it were, a whisper from the mysterious world which surrounds that which is manifest to our everyday senses. Be it the fourth dimension, or what not, we catch for a moment a message from this other world, which, even indistinct, still tells us that this visible world is not all, that there is something beyond. Then, with hard common-sense, they deny their own message, and, so doing, deny to us the world of mystery, and leave us only the material world in which to believe. Not so Emily Brontë. Not so Scott or Shakespeare. We may believe in Hamlet's ghost or not; we may believe or not in the White Lady of Avenel; we may believe or not that Catharine's soul hovered near Heathcliff. But we are still left with a belief in the life after death, and still believe in something beyond experience, and still grope to find those things in heaven and earth of which philosophy does not dream.

But the characters, not the plot, remain in the mind, after reading *Villette*. Madame Beck, whose prototype was Madame Héger, is as clever as Cardinal Wolsey or Cardinal Richelieu; but she uses all her diplomatic skill in the management of a lady's school, which, under her ever watchful eye, with the aid of duplicate keys to the trunks and drawers of the teachers and pupils, runs without friction of any kind.

Lucy Snowe, the English teacher in *Villette*, is far more pleasing than Jane Eyre; she is not so passionate, but her view of life is deeper and broader, and consequently kinder. And there is Paul Emanuel. Who would have believed the rejected professor would have grown into that scholar of middle age? He is so distinctly the foreigner in showing every emotion under which he is labouring. How pathetic and how lovable he is on the day of his fête when he thinks that the English governess has forgotten him, and has not brought even a flower to make the day happier for him! So fretful in little things, so heroic in large things, with so many faults which every pupil can see, but with so many virtues, frank even about his little deceptions, he is a lovable man. But many of Miss Brontë's readers do not find Paul Emanuel as delightful as Paulina, the womanly little girl who grows into the childlike woman. She is as sensitive as the mimosa plant to the people about her. Every event of her childhood, all the people she cared for then, remained indelibly imprinted on her mind, so that, with her, friendship and love are strong and abiding.

Notwithstanding their many defects, Charlotte Brontë's novels have left a permanent impression upon English fiction and have won an acknowledged place among English classics. She first made a minute analysis of the varying

emotions of men and women, and noted the strange, unaccountable attractions and repulsions which everybody has experienced. Paulina, a girl of six, is happy at the feet of Graham, a boy of sixteen, although he is unconscious of her presence. And so instance after instance can be given of affinities and antipathies which lie beyond human reason. She, like her sister Emily, though with less clear vision, was searching for the hidden sources of human feeling and human action.

Charlotte Brontë wrote to a friend:

"I always through my whole life liked to penetrate to the real truth; I like seeking the goddess in her temple, and handling the veil, and daring the dread glance."

Her truthfulness in painting emotion, which to her own generation seemed most daring, even coarse, has given an abiding quality to her work. And besides she created Paulina and Paul Emanuel.

CHAPTER XVI

Mrs. Gaskell

EVER since Eve gave Adam of the forbidden fruit, "and he did eat," the relative position of the sexes has rankled in the heart of man. The sons of Adam proclaim loudly that they were given dominion over the earth and all that the earth contained; but they have been ever ready to follow blindly the beckoning finger of some fair daughter of Eve. Perhaps it is a consciousness of this domination of the weaker sex that has led man to proclaim in such loud tones his mastery over woman, having some doubts of its being recognised by her unless asserted in bold language. At a time when the novels of women received as warm a welcome from the public and as large checks from the publishers as those of men, a writer whose sex need not be given thus discussed their relative merits:

"What is woman, regarded as a literary worker? Simply an inferior animal, educated as an inferior animal. And what is man? He

is a superior being, educated by a superior being. So how can they ever be equal in that particular line?"

Granted the premises, there can be but one conclusion.

The perfect assurance with which men have asserted their own sufficiency in all lines of art would be amusing if it had not been so disastrous in distorting and warping at least three of them: music, the drama, and prose fiction. As slow as the growth of spirituality, has been the recognition of woman's mental and moral power. It seems almost incredible that not many years ago only male voices were heard in places of amusement. Deep, rich, full, and sonorous, no one disputes the beauty of the male chorus; but modern opera would be impossible without the soprano and alto voices, and Madame Patti, Madame Sembrich, and Madame Lehman have proved that in natural gifts and in the technique of art women are not inferior to their brethren.

By the same slow process women have won recognition on the stage. Even in Shakespeare's time men saw no reason why women should acquire the histrionic art. Imagine Juliet played by a boy! Yet Essex, Leicester, Southampton, in the boxes, the groundlings in the pit, and Ben Jonson sitting as critic of all, were well satisfied with it, for they

were used to it, just as men have accepted the heroines of their own novels, though every woman they meet is a refutation of their truth. It only needed a woman in a woman's part to open the eyes of the audience to all they had missed before. Not until the Restoration, did any woman appear on the English stage. The following lines given in the prologue written for the revival of *Othello*, in which the part of Desdemona was acted for the first time by a woman, show how quick critics were to see the folly of the old custom:

> For to speak truth, men act, that are between
> Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen,
> With bone so large, and nerve so uncompliant,
> When you call Desdemona, enter Giant.

As we cannot conceive of the English stage without such women as Mrs. Siddons, Charlotte Cushman, and Ellen Terry, so we cannot conceive of the English novel without such writers as Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mary Mitford, the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot, each one of whom carried some phase of the novel to so high a point that she has stood pre-eminent in her own particular line. Too often we confuse art with its subject-matter. If it requires as much skill to give interest to the everyday occurrences of the home as to the thrilling adventures abroad; to depict the life

of women as the life of men; to reveal the joys and sorrows of a woman's heart as the exultations and griefs of man's; then these women deserve a place equal to that held by Richardson, Fielding, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray. Their art, as their subject-matter, is different. With the exception of George Eliot, they have not virility with its strength and power, but they have femininity, no less strong and powerful, a quality possessed by Scott, but by no other of these masculine writers, with the possible exception of Dickens, and in him it is a femininity, which tends to run to sentimentalism, a different characteristic.

Elizabeth Gaskell, one of the most feminine of writers, is so well known as the author of *Cranford*, that delightful village whose only gentleman dies early in the story, that many of its readers do not know that its author was better known by her contemporaries through her humanitarian novels, in which she discussed the great problems that face the poor.

Mrs. Gaskell, whose maiden name was Stevenson, was born in Chelsea in 1810. She spent the greater part of her childhood and girlhood at the home of her mother's family, Knutsford in Cheshire, the place she afterward made famous under the name of Cranford. In 1832, she married the Reverend William Gaskell,

minister of the Unitarian chapel in Manchester, and that city became her home. She took an active interest in all the affairs of the city, and constantly visited the poor. Her husband's father, besides being the professor of English History and Literature in Manchester New College, a Unitarian institution, was a manufacturer; thus Mrs. Gaskell had the opportunity of hearing both sides of the controversy which was then waging between labour and capital.

In the early forties, there was much suffering among the "mill-hands"; many were dying of starvation, and consequently there were many strikes and uprisings. These conditions led to her writing her first novel, *Mary Barton*. The book was written during the years 1845–1847, although it was not published until 1848. The nucleus of it, Mrs. Gaskell wrote to a friend, was John Barton. Since she herself was constantly wondering at the inequalities of fortune, which permitted some to starve, while others had abundance, how must it affect an ignorant man, himself on the verge of starvation, and filled with pity for the sufferings of his friends? Driven almost insane by the condition of society, and hoping to remedy it, he commits a crime, which preys so upon his conscience that it finally wears out his own life.

Mrs. Gaskell in this, her first novel, has left an undying picture of that section of smoky

Manchester where the mill-workers live: its narrow lanes; small but not uncomfortable cottages, well supplied with furniture in days when work was plentiful, but destitute even of a fire when it was scarce; the undersized men and women, with irregular features, pale blue eyes, sallow complexions, but with an intelligence rendered quick and sharp by their life among the machinery, and by their hard struggle for existence. The life of the poor had often furnished a theme for the poets, but it was the life of shepherds and milkmaids, above whom the blue sky arched, and whose labours were brightened by the songs of the birds, and the colours and sweet odours of fruit and flowers. But Mrs. Gaskell described the life of the poor in a town where factory smoke obscured the light of the sun, and where the weariness of labour was rendered more intense by the clanging factory bell, and the constant whirr of machinery ringing in their ears. It is a gloomy picture, but no gloomier than the reality.

Disraeli in *Sybil* discussed the questions of labour and capital in their relations to the history of England, with a broad intellectual grasp of the sociological causes which produced these conditions. He wrote in the interests of two classes, the Crown and the People, with the hope that England might again have a free monarchy and a prosperous people. It is a

well illustrated treatise on government, but the principles advocated or discussed always overshadow the characters. He had no such intimate knowledge of the lives of the poor as had Mrs. Gaskell. She conducts us to the homes of John Barton, George Wilson, and Job Legh, shows the simplicity of their lives, and their sense of the injustice under which they are suffering, and their helpfulness to each other in times of need.

How simple and true is the friendship that binds Mary Barton, the dressmaker's apprentice; Margaret, the blind singer; and Alice Wilson, the aged laundress, whose mind is constantly dwelling on the green fields and running brooks of her childhood's home. These women possess the strength of character of the early Teutonic women. They are reticent, not given to the exchange of confidences, but ready to help a friend with all they have in the hour of need. When Margaret thinks that the Bartons are in want of money, she says to Mary, "Remember, if you 're sore pressed for money, we shall take it very unkind if you do not let us know." But she does not question her. Later when her great trouble comes to Mary Barton, which she must bear alone, when she must free a lover from the charge of murder without incriminating her father, she shows presence of mind, clearness of vision, and both moral and physical courage.

Jem Wilson, the hero of the story, is as strong as Mary Barton, the heroine. Although Dickens was writing of the poor, he always found some means to educate his heroes, and generally placed them among gentlemen. Jem Wilson's education was received in the factory, and the little rise he made above his fellows was due to his better understanding of machinery. He was a working man, proud of his skill, and of his good name for honesty and sobriety.

The plot of *Mary Barton* is highly melodramatic, and its technique is open to criticism. It should not be read, however, for the story, but for the many home scenes in which we come into close sympathy with the men and women of Manchester. There is no novel in which we feel more strongly the heart-beats of humanity. It leaves the impression, not of art, but of life.

Mrs. Gaskell turned again to the struggles between labour and capital for the plot of her novel *North and South*. Between this story and *Mary Barton* she had written *Cranford* and *Ruth*, but her mind seemed to revert, as it were, from the peaceful village life to the stirring mill-towns of Lancashire. The great contrast between life in the counties of England presided over by the landed gentry, and that in the counties where the manufacturers formed the aristocracy, suggested this book. It was published in 1855, seven years after *Mary*

Barton. The plot of *North and South* is better proportioned than is that of *Mary Barton*. There are fewer characters, better contrasted. It is a brighter picture, with more humour, but it does not leave so strong an impression on the mind as does the earlier work. Both, however, are more accurate than *Hard Times*, a book with which Dickens himself was highly dissatisfied. He knew little of the life in the manufacturing districts, but, in a spirit of indignation at the poverty brought on by grasping manufacturers, he caricatured the entire class in the persons of Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby. When these men are compared with the manufacturers as represented in *North and South*, Mrs. Gaskell's more intimate knowledge of them is at once apparent.

Mrs. Gaskell had been accused of taking sides with the working men, and representing their point of view in *Mary Barton*. In *North and South*, the hero, Mr. Thornton, is a rich manufacturer, a fine type of the self-made man, but standing squarely on his right to do what he pleases in his own factory. "He looks like a person who would enjoy battling with every adverse thing he could meet with—enemies, winds, or circumstances," was Margaret Hale's comment when she first met him. "He 's worth fighting wi', is John Thornton," said one of the leaders of the strike. For although

the condition of affairs in the mill-towns had much improved since John Barton went to London as a delegate from his starving townsmen, and was refused a hearing by Parliament, a large part of the book is concerned with the story of a strike, which in its outcome brought starvation to many of the men, and bankruptcy to some of the masters, the acknowledged victors.

Higgins, one of the leaders of the working men, is a true Lancashire man, and like Thornton, the leader of the masters, has many traits of character as truly American as English. His sturdy independence is well shown in Margaret's first interview with him. The daughter of a vicar in the south of England, she had been accustomed to call upon the poor in her father's parish. Learning that Higgins's daughter, Bessy, is ill she expresses her desire to call upon her. "I 'm none so fond of having stranger folk in my house," Higgins informs her, but he finally relents and says, "Yo may come if yo like."

But besides the conflict between the manufacturers and their employees, with which much of the book is concerned, there is the sharp contrast between the Hales, born and bred in the south of England, and the mill-owners in whose society they are placed. Mr. Hale, indecisive, inactive, in whom thought is more

powerful than reality, is as helpless as a child among these men of action, and utterly unable to cope with the problems they are facing. Margaret, the refined daughter of a poor clergyman, is contrasted with the proud Mrs. Thornton, the mother of a wealthy manufacturer, who would make money, not birth, the basis of social distinctions. But Margaret is even better contrasted with the poor factory girl, Bessy Higgins, who turns to her for help and sympathy. There is hardly a story of Mrs. Gaskell's which is not adorned by the friendship of the heroine for some other woman in the book.

In both these novels, she taught that the only solution of the great problem of capital and labour was a recognition of the fact that their interests were identical, and that friendly intercourse was the only means of breaking down the barrier that divided them.

Mrs. Gaskell was so versatile, she touched upon so many problems of human life, that it is almost impossible to summarise her work. *Ruth* considers the question of the girl who has been betrayed. Ruth is as pure as Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and like her is a victim of circumstances. A stranger who has taken her under her protection reports that Ruth is a widow, and Ruth passively acquiesces in the deception, hoping that her son may never know the disgrace of his birth. But the truth comes

to light, involving in temporary disgrace Ruth and her son, and the household of Mr. Benson, the dissenting minister whose home had been her place of refuge. But Mrs. Gaskell is always optimistic. By her good deeds, Ruth wins the love and honour of the entire community. This novel was loudly assailed. It was claimed that Mrs. Gaskell had condoned immorality, and it was considered dangerous teaching that good deeds were an atonement for such a sin. But if *Ruth* found detractors, it also found warm admirers, who recognised the broader teachings of the story. Mrs. Jameson wrote to Mrs. Gaskell:

"I hope I do understand your aim—you have lifted up your voice against 'that demoralising laxity of principle,' which I regard as the ulcer lying round the roots of society; and you have done it wisely and well, with a mingled courage and delicacy which excite at once my gratitude and my admiration."

The scene of *Sylvia's Lovers* is laid in Whitby, at a time when the press-gang was kidnapping men for the British navy. It is a story of the loves, jealousies, and sorrows of sailors, shopkeepers, and small farmers, among whom Sylvia moves as the central figure. Du Maurier, who illustrated the second edition of this novel, was so charmed with the heroine that he named his daughter Sylvia for her. This story, like

Ruth, has much of the sentimentalism so fashionable in the middle of the nineteenth century. The leading canon of criticism at that time was the power with which a writer could move the emotions of the reader, and the novelist was expected either to convulse his readers with laughter or dissolve them into tears. There are many funny scenes in *Sylvia's Lovers*, but the key-note is pathos. Like many novels of Dickens, there are death-bed scenes introduced only for the luxury of weeping over sorrows that are not real, and there are melodramatic situations as in her other books. Parts of this novel suggested to Tennyson the poem of *Enoch Arden*.

But, however powerful may be the novels dealing with the questions that daily confront the poor, there is a perennial charm in the society of people who dwell amid rural scenes. Mrs. Gaskell has written several short stories of the pastoral type. Such a story is *Cousin Phillis*. It is a beautiful idyl and reminds one of the old pastorals in which ladies and gentlemen played at shepherds and shepherdesses. Cousin Phillis cooks, irons, reads Dante, helps the haymakers, falls in love, and mends a broken heart, and is brave, true, and unselfish. Her father is what one would expect from such a daughter. He cultivates his small farm, finds rest from his labours in reading, and neglects

none of the many duties which belong to him as the dissenting minister of a small village.

Cranford and *Wives and Daughters* have this in common, that the scene of both is laid in the village of Knutsford. The former is a rambling story of events in two or three households, and of the social affairs in which all the village is concerned. It is without doubt the favourite of Mrs. Gaskell's novels. *Wives and Daughters* was Mrs. Gaskell's last story, and was left unfinished at her death. It shows a great artistic advance over her earlier work. The plot is more natural; it has not so many sharp contrasts, which George Eliot criticised in Mrs. Gaskell's stories. The characters are also more subtle. Molly, the daughter of the village doctor, is an unselfish, thoughtful girl, but with none of that unreal goodness which Dickens sometimes gave to his heroines. When she receives her first invitation to a child's party, and her father is wondering whether or not she can go, her speech is characteristic of her nature:

"Please, Papa,—I do wish to go—but I don't care about it."

Molly feels very keenly, and longs for things with all the strength of an ardent nature, but she always subordinates herself and her wishes to others. In the character of Cynthia, Mrs. Gaskell makes a plea for the heartless coquette. Cynthia is beautiful, she likes to please those

in whose company she finds herself, but quickly forgets the absent. It is not her fault that young men's hearts are brittle, for it is as natural for her to smile, and be gay and forget, as it is for Molly to love, be silent, and remember. So it is Cynthia who has the lovers, while Molly is neglected. Clare, Cynthia's mother, is more selfish than her daughter, but she has learned the art of seeming to please others while thinking only of pleasing herself. She is as crafty as Becky Sharp, but softer, more feline, and more subtle; a much commoner type in real life than Thackeray's diplomatic heroine.

Mr. A. W. Ward, in the biographical introduction to the Knutsford Edition of her novels, says of her later work:

"When Mrs. Gaskell had become conscious that if true to herself, to her own ways of looking at men and things, to the sympathies and hopes with which life inspired her, she had but to put pen to paper, she found what it has been usual to call her later manner—the manner of which *Cranford* offered the first adequate illustration, and of which *Cousin Phillis* and *Wives and Daughters* represent the consummation."

The same critic compares the later work of Mrs. Gaskell with the later work of George Sand and finds that "in their large-heartedness" they are similar. He also gives George Sand's tribute to her English contemporary. "Mrs.

Gaskell," she said, "has done what neither I nor other female writers in France can accomplish: she has written novels which excite the deepest interest in men of the world, and yet which every girl will be the better for reading."

It is not often that a novelist finds another writer to take up and enlarge her work as did Mrs. Gaskell. Her novels contain the germ of much of George Eliot's earlier writings. *The Moorland Cottage* suggested many parts of *The Mill on the Floss*. Edward and Maggie Brown —the former important, consequential and dictatorial, the latter self-forgetful, eager to help others, and by her very eagerness prone to blunders—were developed by George Eliot into the characters of Tom and Maggie Tulliver. The weak and fretful mothers in the two books are much alike, while the love story and the catastrophe have the same general outline.

They both drew largely from the working people of the North or of the Midlands, and both constantly introduced Dissenters. Silas Marner belongs to the manufacturing North, and the people of Lantern Yard are of the same class as those of Manchester and Milton. Felix Holt and Adam Bede belong to the same type as Jem Wilson and Mr. Thornton, while Esther Lyon is not unlike Margaret Hale. Both often presented life from the point of view of the poor.

Both were interested in the development of

character, and in the changes which it underwent for good or evil under the influence of outward circumstances. But George Eliot had greater intellectual power than Mrs. Gaskell. She had the broader view and the deeper insight. Mrs. Gaskell could never have conceived the plots nor the characters of *Romola* nor *Middlemarch*. She constantly introduced extraneous matter to shape her plots according to her will, while with George Eliot the fate of character is as hard and unyielding as was the fate of predestination in the sermons of the old Calvinistic divines. Mrs. Gaskell, like Dickens, introduced death-bed scenes merely to play upon the emotions. George Eliot was never guilty of this defect; with her, character is a fatalism that is inexorable.

But Mrs. Gaskell had a more hopeful view of life than had George Eliot. The Unitarians believe in man and have faith in the clemency of God. This makes them a cheerful people. However dark the picture that Mrs. Gaskell paints, we have faith that conditions will soon be better, and at the close of the book we see the dawn of a brighter day. George Eliot had taken the suggestions of Mrs. Gaskell and amplified them with many details that the woman of lesser genius had omitted. But to each was given her special gift. If George Eliot's characters stand out as more distinct personalities,

they are drawn with less sympathy. George Eliot's men and women are often hard and sharp in outline; Mrs. Gaskell's, no matter how poor or ignorant, are softened and refined.

It was this quality that made it possible for her to write that inimitable comedy of manners, *Cranford*. Her other novels with their deep pathos, strong passion, and dramatic situations must be read to show the breadth of her powers, but *Cranford* will always give its author a unique place in literature. Imagine the material that furnished the groundwork of this story put into the hands of any novelist from Richardson to Henry James. It seems almost like sacrilege to think what even Jane Austen might have said of these dear elderly ladies. As for Thackeray, their little devices to keep up appearances would have seemed to him instances of feminine deceit, and he might have put even Miss Jenkyns with her admiration of Dr. Johnson into his *Book of Snobs*. What tears Dickens would have drawn from our eyes over the love story of Miss Matty and Mr. Holbrook. How George Eliot would have mourned over the shallowness of their lives. Henry James would have squinted at them and their surroundings through his eye-glass until he had discovered every faded spot on the carpet or skilful darn in the curtain. Miss Mitford would have appreciated these ladies and loved them as did Mrs. Gaskell, only

she would have been so interested in the flowers and birds and clouds that she would have forgotten all about the Cranford parties, and would probably have ignored the presence in their midst of the Honourable Mrs. Jamieson, the sister-in-law of an earl. So we must conclude that only Mrs. Gaskell could make immortal this village of femininity, where to be a man was considered almost vulgar, but into which she has introduced one of the most chivalrous gentlemen in the person of Captain Browne, and one of the most faithful of lovers in the person of Mr. Holbrook, while no book has a more lovable heroine than fluttering, indecisive Miss Matty, over whose fifty odd years the sorrows of her youth have cast their lengthening shadows.

Mary Barton is a work of genius. Only a woman of high ideals could have drawn the character of Margaret Hale, an earlier Marcella, or Molly Gibson, or Mr. Thornton, or Mr. Holman. Only a woman of deep insight could have created a woman like Ruth: a book which in its problem and its deep earnestness reminds one of *Aurora Leigh*. But her readers will always love Mrs. Gaskell for the sake of the gentle ladies of *Cranford*.

CONCLUSION

MRS. GASKELL died on the twelfth of November, 1865. Of the novelists who have been considered in this book only three survived her, Mrs. Bray, Mrs. S. C. Hall, and Harriet Martineau, but they added little to prose fiction after that date. During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the number of books written by women continued to increase each year. Julia Kavanagh was the author of several novels, the first of which *The Three Paths*, was published in 1848; all her stories were written with high moral aim and delicacy of feeling. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published in 1850, is probably the most powerful novel ever written to plead the cause of oppressed humanity. Dinah Maria Muloch Craik kept up the interest in the domestic novel; her most popular book, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, has lost none of its charm for young women, even if it does not meet the requirements of a classic. Mrs. Henry Wood is still remembered as the author of the melodramatic *East Lynne*, but her best stories are the

Johnny Ludlow Papers, which deal with character alone; her popularity is attested by the fact that more than a million copies of her books have been issued. Charlotte Yonge's forgotten novels were classed among the *Church Stories*, because they contain so much piety and devotion. Of a different type was Miss de la Ramée, who wrote under the name of Ouidà; she had fine gifts of word-painting, but a fondness for the questionable in conduct. Miss Braddon, the author of *Lady Audley's Secret*, excelled in complicated plots. Mrs. Oliphant has been a most versatile writer, and followed almost every style of prose fiction; her domestic stories are generally considered her best. Anne Thackeray, better known as Mrs. Ritchie, the daughter of the great novelist, has written several novels, all of which have a delightfully feminine touch. Miss Rhoda Broughton has entertained the reading public by love stories which hold the attention until the marriage takes place. But all these women fade into insignificance beside George Eliot, whose first story, *The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton*, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1857, and whose last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, was published nearly twenty years later, in 1876.

It seems strange that any reader of her books should have thought them the product of a man's brain, as was at first believed. For,

notwithstanding her power in developing a plot, her breadth of view, and her mental grasp, her genius is essentially feminine. She excelled in analysis of character, in attention to details, in ethical teaching, and in artistic truthfulness, the qualities in which women have been pre-eminent. Only a woman's pen could have drawn such characters as Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, and Dorothea Casaubon, or could have followed the minute and subtle influences under which the plot of *Middlemarch* is shaped. George Eliot has left a larger portrait gallery of women than any other novelist. Not only has she drawn different grades of society, but, what is perhaps a more difficult task, she has drawn the different grades of spiritual greatness and moral littleness. She brought the psychological novel to a degree of perfection which has never been surpassed.

Mrs. Oliphant has thus written of George Eliot's place in literature:

"Another question which has been constantly put to this age, and which is pushed with greater zeal every day, as to the position of women in literature and the height which it is in their power to attain, was solved by this remarkable woman, in a way most flattering to all who were and are fighting the question of equality between the two halves of mankind; for here was visibly a woman who was to be

kept out by no barriers, who sat down quietly from the beginning of her career in the highest place, and, if she did not absolutely excel all her contemporaries in the revelation of the human mind and the creation of new human beings, at least was second to none in those distinguishing characteristics of genius."

We are too near the nineteenth century to decide as to the relative positions of its great novelists. At one time George Eliot was placed at the head of all writers of fiction, with Dickens and Thackeray as rivals for the second place. But she was dethroned by Thackeray, and there are signs that the final kingship will be given to Charles Dickens, unless Scott receives it instead.

Fashions in novels change at least every fifty years. Exciting plots and situations, strong emotional scenes, sharp contrasts, are not demanded by present readers, who also turn away with disgust from the saintly heroine and the irreclaimable villain. Of the many volumes of fiction written in the eighteenth century only two are in general circulation to-day, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. But all those once popular novels, even if their very names are now forgotten, have done their work in shaping the thought and morals of their own and succeeding generations.

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